



Integrating the MISSING GAME with State school standards for grades 6, 7, & 8 in reading and writing

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Web Wise Kids
P. O. Box 27203
Santa Ana, California 92799

(866) web-wise (866-932-9473)
www.webwisekids.com

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Introduction

Missing is an interactive game designed to teach middle school students how to stay safe while enjoying the communication tools available on the Internet.

Developed by Live Wires Design in Canada, the *Missing* game was launched in February 2000. With the permission of Live Wires, Web Wise Kids, a non-profit organization out of Santa Ana, California, has distributed the game within the United States. At the close of the 2004 school year, *Missing* had spread to 42 states and had reached tens of thousands of middle-school students.

In addition to positive feedback from students, parents, teachers, and youth leaders, *Missing* has received the “Computerworld” Smithsonian Award and the “High Technology Industry Information Highway” Award.

Educators can utilize the *Missing* game as a unique form of classroom curriculum to enhance students’ reading and writing skills. **Designing lessons around *Missing* will promote improved student achievement for all students including students with special needs, students with various learning styles, and ESL students. It also meets the needs of instructors with various levels of technology skills and is flexible enough to work with all teaching styles.**

This document identifies the alignment of the *Missing* game to the California Content Standards for grades 6, 7, and 8 in Reading and Writing. In addition, it includes examples of sample lesson strategies designed to reinforce and practice the skills students apply while playing *Missing*.

The percentage testing data provided in this document is based on the Blueprint adopted by the California State Board of Education on October 9, 2002 and identified by the California Department of Education to apply to subsequent California Standards Tests (CSTs).

In a message about English-Language Arts Standards, the California State Board of Education and the California Superintendent of Public Education state, “These standards are rigorous. With student mastery of this content, California students will be on a par with those in the best educational systems in other states and nations.” Content standards for English-Language Arts around the country are very similar to California’s standards, and we believe that *Missing* can easily be aligned with content standards in other states as well, using this document as a guide.

Prepared by Carol Taylor Cann

Carol is currently a consultant to child advocacy organizations. She taught Language Arts at the Middle School level for twelve years and worked in K-12 public policy for an additional ten years.

California Content Standards for Reading in Grades 6, 7, and 8

Descriptive Statement for California Reading Standards 1.0

1.0 WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND SYSTEMATIC VOCABULARY

DEVELOPMENT: Students use their knowledge of word origins and word relationships, as well as historical and literary context clues, to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level appropriate words.

(6th Reading CST - 17%; 7th Reading CST - 15%; 8th Read CST - 12%)

Reading Standards

6th Grade - 1.4 Vocabulary and Concept Development: monitor expository text for unknown words or words with novel meanings by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.

7th Grade – 1.3 Vocabulary and Concept Development: clarify word meanings through the use of definition, example, restatement, or contrast.

8th Grade – 1.3 Vocabulary and Concept Development: use word meanings within the appropriate context and show ability to verify those meanings by definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.

Vocabulary development contained in *Missing Game*:

Episode 1 – “Just Friends”

The protagonist’s Father, Ted, asks the police to investigate the messages between his son, Zack, and a stranger named Fantasma.

Vocabulary:

1. data base
2. animation
3. engineer
4. morphing
5. evidence
6. programmer
7. modifications
8. Kenya

9. Peace Arch Park

Episode 2 – “Baiting the Hook”

Zack visits Fantasma’s website, California Dreaming. He is so impressed that he begs Fantasma for a job.

Vocabulary:

- 10. zine
- 11. cryptogram
- 12. resume
- 13. roving
- 14. seawall

Episode 3 – “Caught in the Net”

When Ted discovers his son’s plan to go to California, he forbids Zack to contact Fantasma. The next day, Zack disappears.

Vocabulary:

- 15. courier
- 16. collaborator
- 17. encrypted
- 18. seized
- 19. retrieve
- 20. encoded
- 21. brethren
- 22. dwelling
- 23. unity
- 24. phantom

Episode 4 – “Living in Paradise”

Zack surfaces in San Diego where he is working for Fantasma. He goes to the beach to find children who want to model for the website.

Vocabulary:

- 25. Houdini
- 26. duffel bag

Episode 5 – “Closing the Trap”

Fantasma is pressuring Zack to model for California Dreaming. When Zack refuses, Fantasma threatens him.

Vocabulary:

- 27. militia

28. videolink
29. conquistador
30. portfolio

Episode 6 – “The Betrayal”

When Fantasma learns that the police are searching for him, he kidnaps Zack and promises Ted: “You’ll never, never see Zack again.”

Vocabulary:

31. latitude
32. longitude
33. betrayal

Sample Lesson Strategies

Written Assignments: Students create an Investigator’s Notebook (IN). This Notebook will contain all the assignments related to this unit of study, notes from classroom discussions, and any student journal entries.

1. Students create a vocabulary section in their IN, locate the identified words in each episode, and write down the sentence in which the word is used. Using a dictionary, they write the proper definition for the word and explain the clues used in the text to assist their understanding of the word. In Grades 7 and 8, vocabulary development may be enhanced by asking students to offer antonyms for specific vocabulary words.
2. At the end of each episode, students write a summary of the evidence they have gathered and their interpretation of the evidence. They use each vocabulary word in their summary.
3. Students identify words used in *Missing* that are new to the English language, and relate this to the changes in society as technology changes.
4. Students use clues from the game, as well as map and research skills to identify the location of Kenya.
5. Students research the location and history of Peach Arch Park in British Columbia, Canada.

Descriptive Statement for California Reading Standards 2.0

2.0 READING COMPREHENSION (FOCUS ON INFORMATIONAL

MATERIALS): Students read and understand grade-level appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. The selections in *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition, by grade eight, students read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of grade-level appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information). In grade six, students continue to make progress toward this goal. In grade seven, students make substantial progress toward this goal. (6th CST - 24%; 7th CST - 23%; 8th CST - 24%)

Reading Standards

6th Grade – 2.3 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: connect and clarify main ideas by identifying their relationships to other sources and related topics.

6th Grade – 2.4 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, logical notes, summaries, or reports.

7th Grade – 2.3 Structural Features of Informational Materials: analyze text that uses cause-and-effect organizational pattern.

7th Grade – 2.4 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: identify and trace the development of an author’s argument, point of view, or perspective in text.

8th Grade – 2.4 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: compare the original text to a summary to determine whether the summary accurately captures the main ideas, includes critical details, and conveys the underlying meaning.

8th Grade – 2.6 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: use information from a variety of consumer, workplace, and public documents to explain a situation or decision and to solve a problem.

Missing is a game based on a true story. Students progress through the game in the role of investigators piecing together information, breaking word codes, building character descriptions, and applying map skills in an effort to locate Zach, an adolescent boy. Zach has run away from home to live what he believes will be an exciting life in southern California with Fantasma, a man he met on the Internet. Throughout each episode of the *Missing* game, it is recommended that each student work cooperatively with another student to read and understand descriptive narrative text,

online dialogue between characters, and directions from law enforcement.

Students become highly engaged in the reading because they must interpret the information in order to gather the necessary clues to move forward in the game. After they interpret the sequence of events and begin gathering clues, students must apply the concrete information in their quest to locate the missing young man. Application of the information requires the readers to give serious reflection on the expectations and intent of each character. The contrasting expectations will give the reader the abstract ideas to begin building accurate character descriptions of the protagonist and antagonist in the game.

Upon completion of the game *Missing*, students will apply their reading to understand the fundamental theme of the game. A culminating outcome to *Missing* is for readers to synthesize the understanding of the real world danger of Internet predators that they gleaned from this game into an Internet Safety Plan for their personal use and to share it with family members.

Sample Lesson Strategies

1. Students develop dense questions to clarify main ideas in each episode of the game.
Example: Why does Zach feel alienated from friends and family, and how is this related to what many of today's teens feel? Does this feeling of alienation feed into Fantasma's manipulative scheme?
2. Students use IN to collect and interpret clues from each episode of the game.
3. Students analyze the cause and effect of choices made by each main character.
4. Students identify the author's point of view at various stages of the game. They specify the clues they used to understand the author's perspective. Students journal or discuss their personal response to this point of view.
5. The *Missing* kit comes with a summary of the game. Students evaluate copies of the summary for accuracy.
6. Students research the issue of Internet stalking by gathering information from a variety of sources such as law enforcement, newspapers, other media sources, and child advocacy organizations. They apply this information in a compare and contrast essay, letter to the editor, informational presentation to other students, or other forms of expository writing.

Descriptive Statement for California Reading Standards 3.0

3.0 LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS: Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science. They clarify the ideas and connect them to other literary works.

(6th grade CST - 16%; 7th grade CST - 17%; 8th Grade CST - 20%)

Reading Standards

6th Grade - 3.2 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: analyze the effect of the qualities of the character (e.g., courage or cowardice, ambition or laziness) on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.

6th Grade - 3.3 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: analyze the influence of setting on the problem and its resolution.

6th Grade - 3.6 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.

6th Grade - 3.8 Literary Criticism: critique the credibility of characterization and the degree to which a plot is contrived or realistic (e.g., compare use of fact and fantasy in historical fiction).

7th Grade - 3.2 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: identify events that advance the plot, and determine how each event explains past or present action(s) or foreshadows future action(s).

7th Grade - 3.3 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: analyze characterization as delineated through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator's description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

7th Grade - 3.4 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: identify and analyze recurring themes across works (e.g., the value of bravery, loyalty, and friendship; the effects of loneliness).

8th Grade - 3.2 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: evaluate the structural elements of the plot (e.g., subplots, parallel episodes, climax), the plot's development, and the way in which conflicts are (or are not) addressed and resolved.

8th Grade - 3.3 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: compare and contrast motivations and reactions of literary characters from different historical eras confronting similar situations or conflicts.

8th Grade - 3.4 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: analyze the relevance of

the setting (e.g., place, time, customs) to the mood, tone, and meaning of the text.

8th Grade - 3.5 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: identify and analyze recurring themes (e.g., good versus evil) across traditional and contemporary works.

8th Grade - 3.7 Literary Criticism: analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its author (Biographical Approach).

Although *Missing* is not a work of literature, it is similar to a piece of literature in its structure. The game contains the elements of setting, plot, characterization, and theme. Students understand the lure of the southern California image to an adolescent boy feeling neglected or abandoned by his parents and struggling to find an identity in a school where his peers consider him a nerd. The game does an excellent job of developing realistic characterizations for Zack, the protagonist, and Fantasma, the antagonist. It also develops a strong background character in Ted, Zack's father. The plot of the game gradually builds to a climax giving the readers an opportunity to develop their understanding of the theme which is never directly stated. This game is an excellent teaching tool for teachers who are introducing and/or reinforcing the fundamental elements of literature.

Sample Lesson Strategies

1. Students compare and contrast the two main characters' motivations, actions, and reactions. They apply these qualities to the conflicts in the plot and the final outcome.
2. Students analyze and interpret elements of character development through their words, actions, thoughts, and interactions with other characters.
3. Students draw conclusions and make inferences based on explicit and implied meaning.
4. Students describe the setting as presented to Zach. Then, they analyze how the offer of living and working there influences his decision, and how this decision drives the plot.
5. Students identify the implied theme of the *Missing* game and how the author shared this through the development of literary elements such as characterization, plot, and setting.
6. Students evaluate the credibility of the *Missing* game by relating it to other reading materials and personal life experiences. They will analyze whether the events and characters are realistic and why or why not.

7. Students identify the recurring themes in *Missing* such as loneliness, manipulation, parent/adolescent conflict, trust and expectations and relate them to pieces of literature previously read.
8. Students identify the most important ideas in the *Missing* game, put the ideas into their own words, and make connections between the important ideas.
9. Acting as investigators, students develop profiles of each main character. This includes a description of personality traits and physical characteristics. A drawing of the character can also be included in the profile.
10. Students make predictions and modify them as clues are presented. They design a graph or rubric identifying the main elements of the plot including problem, climax, outcome and main events leading up to the climax and the outcome.
11. Students analyze the text and formulate a thesis for *Missing* that is supported through reader assertions and evidence from the text in the game. These interpretations are presented to the class in a seminar format.

California Content Standards for Writing in Grades 6, 7, and 8

Descriptive Statement for California Writing Standards 1.0 – Conventions

1.0 WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS: Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

(6th Writing CST - 21%; 7th Writing CST - 21%; 8th Writing - 21%)

Writing Standards

6th Grade - 1.1 Sentence Structure: use simple, compound, and compound-complex sentences; use effective coordination and subordination or ideas to express complete thoughts.

6th Grade - 1.2 Grammar: identify and properly use indefinite pronouns and present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect verb tenses; ensure that verbs agree with compound subjects.

6th Grade - 1.3 Punctuation: use colons after the salutation in business letters, semi-colons to connect independent clauses, and commas when linking two clauses with a conjunction in compound sentences.

6th Grade - 1.4 Capitalization: use correct capitalization.

6th Grade - 1.5 Spelling: spell frequently misspelled words correctly (e.g., their, they're, there).

7th Grade - 1.1 Sentence Structure: place modifiers properly, and use the active voice.

7th Grade - 1.4 Grammar: demonstrate the mechanics of writing (e.g., quotation marks, commas at end of dependent clauses) and appropriate English usage (e.g., pronoun reference).

7th Grade - 1.6 Capitalization: use correct capitalization.

8th Grade - 1.1 Sentence Structure: use correct and varied sentence types and sentence openings to present a lively and effective personal style.

8th Grade - 1.3 Sentence Structure: use subordination, coordination, apposition, and other

devices to indicate clearly the relationship between ideas.

8th Grade - 1.5 Punctuation and Capitalization: use correct punctuation and capitalization.

8th Grade - 1.6 Spelling: use correct spelling conventions.

Missing is an ideal prompt to assist teachers in motivating middle school students to write. Students react to the medium as familiar and fun, and the content of *Missing* piques their interest. In addition, most students have a reference point with the themes contained in *Missing* which is one of the critical elements needed to encourage reluctant middle school students to write.

Much of the dialogue in *Missing* is presented in email format. Proper English conventions are used by all characters. This provides students with excellent modeling of Internet communication without the use of slang.

Sample Lesson Strategies

- 1. All of the above standards for Written and Oral English Language Conventions will be applied to the assignments contained in the Investigator's Notebook as well as classroom discussions and seminars.**
- 2. Specific written assignments in the Investigator's Notebook can be used for guided and independent practice of a specific skill following lessons designed to directly teach English conventions (e.g., use of antecedents, punctuation usage).**
- 3. The sample lesson strategies suggested for the following Writing Standards will all require students to demonstrate proper application of the English Language Conventions standards.**

Descriptive Statement for California Writing Standards 1.0 – Strategies

1.0 WRITING STRATEGIES: Students write clear, coherent, and focused essays.

The writing exhibits students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Essays contain formal introductions, supporting evidence, and conclusions. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

(6th, 7th, and 8th Writing CST - 23%)

Writing Standards

6th Grade - 1.1 Organization and Focus: choose the form of writing (e.g., personal letter, letter to the editor, review, poem, report, narrative) that best suits the intended purpose.

6th Grade - 1.2 Organization and Focus: create multiple-paragraph expository compositions

1) Engage the interest of the reader and state a clear purpose.

2) Develop the topic with supportive details and precise verbs, nouns, and adjectives to paint a visual image in the mind of the reader.

3) Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of composition.

6th Grade - 1.3 Organization and Focus: use a variety of effective and coherent organizational patterns, including comparison and contrast; organization by categories; and arrangement of spatial order, order of importance, or climactic order.

6th Grade - 1.4 Research and Technology: use organizational features of electronic text (e.g., bulletin boards, databases, keyword searches, e-mail addresses) to locate information.

6th Grade - 1.5 Research and Technology: compose documents with appropriate formatting by using word-processing skills and principles of design (e.g., margins, tabs, spacing, columns, page orientation).

6th Grade - 1.6 Evaluation and Revision: revise writing to improve organization and consistency of ideas within and between paragraphs.

7th Grade - 1.1 Organization and Focus: create an organizational structure that balances all aspects of the composition and uses effective transitions between sentences to unify important ideas.

7th Grade - 1.2 Organization and Focus: support all statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts, and statistics, and specific examples.

7th Grade - 1.3 Organization and Focus: use strategies of note-taking, outlining, and summarizing to impose structure on composition drafts.

7th Grade - 1.4 Research and Technology: identify topics; ask and evaluate questions; and

develop ideas leading to inquiry, investigation, and research.

7th Grade - 1.5 Research and Technology: give credit for both quoted and paraphrased information in a bibliography by using a consistent and sanctioned format and methodology for citations.

7th Grade - 1.7 Evaluation and Revision: revise writing to improve organization and word choice after checking the logic of the ideas and the precision of the vocabulary.

8th Grade - 1.1 Organization and Focus: create compositions that establish a controlling impression, have a coherent thesis, and end with a clear and well-supported conclusion.

8th Grade - 1.2 Organization and Focus: establish coherence within and among paragraphs through effective transitions, parallel structures, and similar writing techniques.

8th Grade - 1.3 Organization and Focus: support theses or conclusions with analogies, paraphrases, quotations, opinions from authorities, comparisons, and similar devices.

8th Grade - 1.4 Research and Technology: plan and conduct multiple-step information searches by using computer networks and modems.

8th Grade - 1.5 Research and Technology: achieve an effective balance between researched information and original ideas.

8th Grade - 1.6 Evaluation and Revision: revise writing for word choice; appropriate organization; consistent point of view; and transitions between paragraphs, passages, and ideas.

***Missing* is an excellent prompt to use for teaching the writing process. It can be applied to introductory lessons as well as advanced lessons. Teachers can use the content of *Missing* to present and develop concepts such as thesis identification, concrete and abstract language, supportive details, transitions, and conclusions. It is also ideal for teaching various forms of writing, organization and research skills.**

Sample Lesson Strategies

1. Students develop the *Missing* game into a short story that includes primary literary elements.
2. Students write persuasive letters to the editor on the topic of Internet safety.
3. Students write informative letters to local elected officials and/or law enforcement after

researching the prevalence of Internet predators in local community.

4. Students write expository narrative explaining personal reaction to *Missing*.
5. Students write expository narrative designed to compare and contrast various student reaction to *Missing*.
6. Students write compare and contract essay identifying risks of online communication versus face-to-face communication with strangers.
7. Students write research-based essay explaining the risks, benefits, and safety methods of Internet communication.
8. Students use poetry to express personal reaction to Internet predators and lessons learned from *Missing*.
9. Students write a personal letter to a friend sharing information on the dangers of Internet predators.
10. Students research state and federal laws that are designed to protect people from Internet predators. They write a research-based expository essay explaining the laws. They identify any areas of concern and share this information with elected officials.
11. Students write articles to submit to the school newspaper on the topic of Internet safety.
12. Students create a website containing information to help protect peers from online predators, including links to Internet safety organizations.