**MAX CASSIDY: ESCAPE FROM SAHDOW ISLAND**

**By Paul Adam**

**2013 LOUISIANA YOUNG READERS’ CHOICE NOMINEE**

**GRADES 6-8**

*Submitted by Tammy DiBartolo, Outreach/Youth Services Coordinator, Rapides Parish Library, Alexandria LA*

**Max Cassidy Escape from Shadow Island by Paul Adam.** Walden Pond Press. 2009. 295 pages.

**Summary**

Max, a fourteen year old escape artist can escape from anything! He is one of the world’s best and he learned the art from his father. Two years ago, Max learned that his father was murdered and his mother went to jail for the crime. One night a man shows up at Max’s show and tells Max that his mother is innocent and that his father is alive! Max has one clue to go on; a slip of paper with eight numbers written on it. What could these numbers mean? Max must travel from his home in London to Santo Domingo in search of his father. Finding his father will mean that his mother can be freed from prison and their family can be reunited. But...it is not going to be that easy.

**Author’s Biography**

Paul Adam is an adult fiction author. He has also written scripts for both films and television. This is his first novel for children. Paul lives in Sheffield, England with his family.

Source of Author Information

Paul Adam’s Official Website: <http://www.pauladam.co.uk/>

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Social Studies**

Consuela tells Max that his dad is a celebrity. Have students discuss what being a celebrity means. Who are some current celebrities in politics, movies, music and sports? Who are some from the past? Are there any celebrities in your home town? Find pictures in newspapers, magazines or the internet of celebrities and share with the class.

Max’s mom is in prison wrongfully accused of killing her husband. She was found guilty in a court of law. Can an innocent person be found guilty of a crime and sent to prison? How could this happen? Hold a “mock trial” in the classroom with students participating in the roles of defendant, judge, district attorney, defense lawyer and bailiff. Go to - <http://library.thinkquest.org/J0113061/mock.htm> for instructions.

Max must leave London and go to Santa Domingo to find the person who can clear his mom’s name. In order to leave the country, Max must have a passport. What is a passport and why are they needed? Go to <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_a8vATy25gyM/THVFv4v5iiI/AAAAAAAAEOk/LvqkDfY0FVw/s1600/Int.%2Bpassport%252Bcase.jpg> for a template to make your own passport.

The only clue that Max has is a slip of paper with the code 11138352? What does this mean? What is a code and how are they useful. Have students discuss the way codes have been used throughout history. Why are codes important in wars? With spies? Have students research the Navajo code talkers. Have students break into groups and make their own coded message then exchange with other students to see if they can “break” the code.

There have been many famous magicians or illusionists in history. Have students research Harry Houdini in the encyclopedia. What was Houdini most famous for?

**Science and Health and Physical Education**

“The hand is quicker than the eye!” This is what magicians always tell their audiences. Magic is simply an illusion. Discuss illusions and find examples at <http://www.akahoudini.org/images/Teach_Res/What_is_Illusion.pdf>

When Max does the water escape trick he says the key to pulling off the illusion is to stay calm and control your breathing. Max’s ability to hold his breath helps him when he is going through the pipe to Shadow Island. Have students practice controlled breathing as a relaxation technique.

The people on Shadow Island were making money by illegally stripping the Rainforest of trees. What happens to the environment when the trees are cut down? Lots of items that we use everyday come from the Rainforest, talk about some of them. <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/kids/facts>.

Julius Clark and his men were doing medical experiments on the prisoners at Shadow Island. Have students discuss the pros and cons of medical testing on humans. On animals? Have students search the databases for newspaper or magazine articles on this subject. Divide students into small groups (some pro, some con) and have them discuss the issue.

**Discussion Questions**

1. How old is Max and what country does he live in?
2. What is Max’s hobby?
3. Why was Max’s mother in prison?
4. What was Max’s father’s occupation?
5. What does it mean to “reopen” a court case?
6. Max needs a passport to get from London to Santa Domingo. What is a passport and who needs one?
7. What is a charter boat?
8. What happened to Isabella’s father?
9. What is a bribe? Who did Estevez tell Max to bribe to get his mom out of prison?
10. What was being done on Shadow Island?
11. What did Max find out about his father?
12. How was Max able to get off the island?
13. What did the code lead Max to?
14. Why is Max’s father hiding?