

The Great Emerson Art Heist (SAT vocabulary-building novel)

Review by Amanda Hopkins

Kendall Svengalis
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<http://www.DunelandPress.com>

Do you have a mystery loving High Schooler who is trying to get ready for the SATs? Trying to get them to focus on learning vocabulary words can be frustrating, unless you find a way to include it into something they love.

The Great Emerson Art Heist by Kendall Svengalis is a great story set in August of 1942. There are 362 pages to the story, 478 if you include the glossaries at the end of the book. There are over 2,000 SAT vocabulary words, over 300 bolded cultural literacy references and over 200 illustrations.

This book is full of action, adventure and mystery. It pulls the kids, and adults, into the story right away. Ellen Anderson and Natalia Boroskova meet on a train from New York to Chicago. When the art collection at Emerson High School goes missing, the two girls work together to find the missing collection.

At the end of the story, you find all the vocabulary words in a glossary. This helps to learn and understand the new words that are presented within the story. If there is ever a question as to what a word means, you or your child can simply find the meaning of the word and continue reading. This can be two-fold though, and you can lose yourself in flipping back and forth between the story and the glossary too much.

I added a simple chapter summary for my son to use while reading the book. I was able to check in with him as to what he was reading, and having him answer simple questions after reading each day, allowed him to let the story sink in. Not only that, but instead of focusing on all the vocabulary words in each chapter, I only had him pick out four at a time. I figured we would be able to read this a few times and work through more and more words, a little at a time.

We loved this story, and while it was fun learning all about the new words, there were a lot. While most of them we already knew, nominations and hastily, there were a lot of new ones as well, verisimilitude. Breaking down the chapters and knowing that we would come back to this again helped us get through the book. Since my son is only in 10th grade, I figure we can read this at least one or two more times before he is ready for the test.

I personally loved the story, and loved hearing the story from my son's perspective. Learning new words and hearing him use new words are the added benefit to the wonderful story we are given!

If you are looking for a story that will catch your child's attention and build their vocabulary skills before that big test, this is the book for you! Your child will love the story and you will love the learning, you both win!

—Product review by Amanda Hopkins, The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, LLC, January, 2017

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