

THE VANISHING

MARK GREENWOOD
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YEAR LEVEL: Y4–8

ABOUT THE BOOK

In 1978, a young pilot vanishes during a routine flight over a notorious stretch of water. His radio transmission to airport control is one of the most bizarre ever recorded. What did Frederick Valentich encounter? Where did he disappear to? Can the truth be found? Join the History Hunter to explore this extraordinary story in *The Vanishing*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Greenwood is a history hunter. He enjoys searching for lost explorers and glittering treasure, delving into baffling mysteries and investigating famous cold cases. His award-winning books examining history and multicultural themes have been honoured internationally.

THEMES

- History
- Extraterrestrial life
- UFOs/UAPs
- Aviation
- Mystery
- News media

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- Y4–8 English
- Y4–8 Humanities and Social Sciences
- Y4–8 Science
- Y4–8 The Arts
- Y4–8 Design and Technology

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: markgreenwood.com.au
- Australian online library database: trove.nla.gov.au



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. The first chapter begins with a question: '**Are we alone in the universe?**' (p. 9). What is your opinion? What proof would you need to persuade you otherwise?
2. A mystery is something inexplicable, unknown or puzzling. What other mysteries can you think of?
3. Fiction or non-fiction – which do you think makes for a better story?
4. Author Mark Greenwood describes himself as a history hunter. Does history hunting appeal to you?
5. What do these acronyms from the book mean?
 - a. UFO
 - b. UAP
 - c. RAAF
6. What personal attributes do you need to become a pilot? Which attributes did Frederick Valentich demonstrate in his journey to becoming a pilot?
7. What do the following words from the story mean? Use each word in an original sentence.
 - a. propulsion (p. 11)
 - b. phenomena (p. 11)
 - c. manoeuvres (p. 11)
 - d. sceptics (p. 11)
 - e. anticipated (p. 25)
 - f. baffling (p. 29)
8. A prefix added to the beginning of a word changes the meaning. Identify the base word and prefix of these words from the story. How has the prefix changed its meaning?
 - a. interplanetary (p. 11)
 - b. undeterred (p. 19)
 - c. misquoted (p. 46)
 - d. disoriented (p. 57)
 - e. abnormal (p. 76)
9. 'Radio lingo' is used when communicating over a radio or walkie-talkie so that a conversation can be understood clearly and quickly. Read the transcript of the radio transmission between Frederick Valentich and Steve Robey, Melbourne Air Traffic Control Flight Service, starting on page 33. What do these terms mean in radio lingo?
 - a. affirmative
 - b. roger
 - c. stand by
 - d. say again
10. Why do you think the author has included a collage of newspaper articles and headlines on page 59?
11. Analyse the Roy Manifold photograph on page 77. What do you think this image depicts?
12. On page 65, the author makes a comparison between the Bass Strait and the Bermuda Triangle.
 - a. Why has this comparison been made?
 - b. What other unexplained phenomena have occurred in 'The Bass Strait Triangle'?
 - c. What do you think is the most likely explanation for these areas with '**a reputation for vanishing ships and planes**' (p. 65)?
13. After finishing the book, what do you think happened to Frederick Valentich? What evidence persuaded you?
14. Is this a fiction book, a non-fiction book or a combination of fiction and non-fiction? Find examples from the text to support your opinion.
15. Do you think the author is trying to inform, entertain or persuade readers in this book? Do you think the author's point of view influenced the information presented in the book?
16. Explain the meaning of this quote by Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the Moon, in the final chapter: '**Mystery creates wonder and wonder is the basis of [our] desire to understand**' (p. 98). Why do you think the author chose to include this quote?

Creative Writing

1. Write a short story that involves a UFO or alien encounter.
2. Write an extraterrestrial character description. Include a physical description, personality traits and skills/abilities.

3. Write a front-page newspaper report about Frederick Valentich's disappearance. Include all the key details, as well as an enticing headline.
4. Write a fictitious newspaper report describing the sighting of a mysterious object in the sky.
5. Write and illustrate a graphic comic strip based around the voice transmission between Frederick Valentich and Steve Robey, Melbourne Air Traffic Control Flight Service.

Humanities and Social Sciences

1. On a map of the region, locate these key locations from the text: Victoria, Tasmania, Melbourne, the Bass Strait, Cape Otway, King Island, Moorabbin Airport, Apollo Bay.
2. After reading the book, what questions do you still have about Frederick Valentich's disappearance? Create a list of focus questions to investigate online or at the library.
3. Create a timeline of the events surrounding Frederick Valentich's disappearance.
4. Author Mark Greenwood has used both primary and secondary sources in researching the book. Read the 'More to Explore' section and create a list that identifies which sources are primary and which are secondary.
5. The Valentich family migrated from Italy to Australia. What were some of the reasons people migrated to Australia in the mid-20th century?

Science

1. On page 49, the author states that the objective of air accident investigators was the prevention of future accidents. How can gathering data and evidence from incidents such as Frederick Valentich's disappearance inform aviation in the future?
2. What modern technology could have aided in the search for Frederick Valentich and the missing Cessna?
3. Research a reported UFO sighting online, such as the Westall UFO, a sighting at Wycliffe Well or Pine Gap, or the famous Roswell incident. Investigate the claim and draw a conclusion about its validity based on available evidence, such as photos, interviews and news reports.

The Arts

1. Re-enact the radio transmission between Frederick Valentich and Melbourne Air Traffic Control Flight Service (pp. 33–41).
2. Consider Frederick Valentich's disappearance from the point of view of a 'believer' and a 'non-believer'. How might their opinions be reinforced by the media's coverage of the event?
3. How do you think news coverage of a story such as Frederick Valentich's disappearance would differ today? How have regulations and ethics around reporting changed since the 1970s?

Design and Technology

1. Design and create a model UFO using found objects and scrap materials. Consider the shape and forces that will move and control the UFO. What criteria could you use to evaluate your design?