

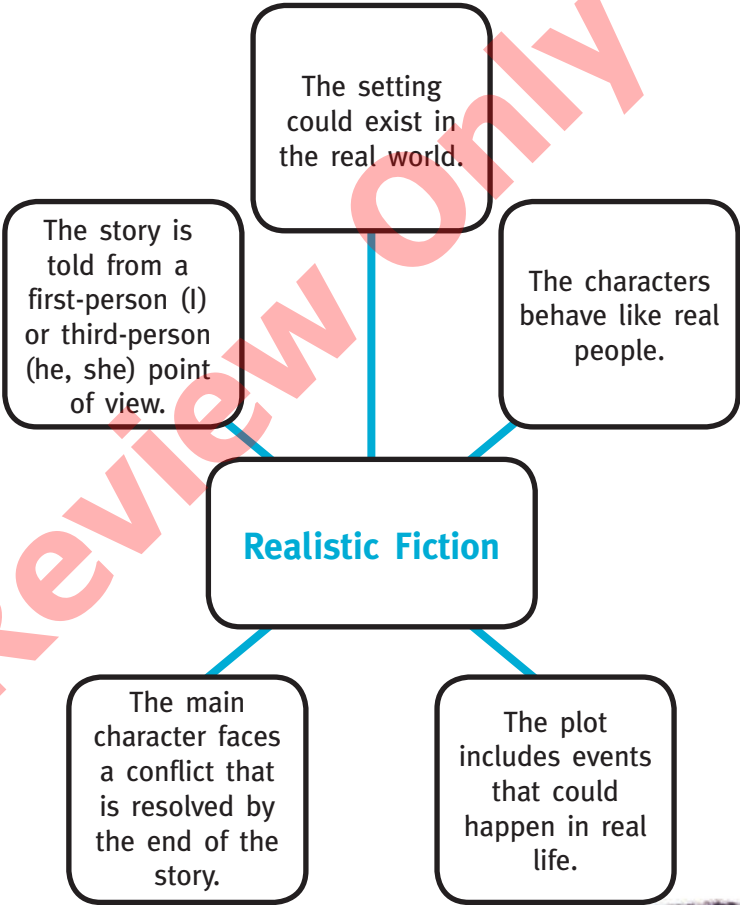
LOST ALONG THE RIO GRANDE

by Lisa Jo Rudy • illustrated by Odessa Sawyer



Realistic Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



© Benchmark Education Company, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Printed in Guangzhou, China. XXXX-XX-XXXX

LEXILE® is a trademark of MetaMetrics, Inc., and is registered in the United States and abroad.

E-books and additional digital resources available at benchmarkuniverse.com.

ISBN: 978-1-5322-8030-6

Toll-Free 1-877-236-2465
www.benchmarkeducation.com
www.benchmarkuniverse.com

BENCHMARK EDUCATION COMPANY
145 Huguenot Street • New Rochelle, NY • 10801



Helmets and Cowboy Hats

Jamila looked out the car window at the mountains in the distance. Gravel crunched beneath the tires as they parked.

“We’re here!” her brother Ben shouted, then jumped out of the car.

“And here come your cousins,” said their dad.

Another car pulled into the parking lot. Uncle Nate got out and boomed, “Welcome to Texas! This is where your mom and I grew up, but I bet this is pretty different from where you live in Nebraska. Am I right?”

“It sure is,” smiled Ben. “All these hills and rocks instead of grass.”

Jamila smiled and nodded. This was her first time **white-water rafting**, and she couldn’t wait to travel down between the great rocky **canyons** of Texas. She was sure it would be thrilling.

Jamila and her brother explored the area. They walked past a wooden cabin at the edge of the parking lot, but it didn't appear as if anyone was there. They got down to the water, but there were no white-water **rapids** like Jamila had imagined.

"Is this the right place, Mom?" she asked, skeptically. "The river isn't moving very fast."

"Just you wait," their mom said, laughing. "The river will be fast enough a little farther down."

Jamila's little cousin, Theo, popped out of the car, followed by Aunt Marian, wearing a big cowboy hat.

"You're going to lose that hat on the rapids," Jamila's mom teased her.

"Not me," replied Aunt Marian with a smile. "I never travel without my hat!"



As the family gathered together in the parking lot, a young woman came out of the cabin. “Hi, y’all, is this the Robinson family trip?” she asked.

“Yes, that’s us,” replied Uncle Nate. “We’ve been meaning to have a family reunion, and now we’re actually doing it.” Uncle Nate hugged Jamila.

“Wait,” said Aunt Marian. “Where’s Jake?” She frowned, then headed back to the car and returned with a sulky-looking teenager. “Okay,” said Aunt Marian, “we’re all here.”

“Great,” the young woman said, “I’m your guide, and I’m going to help you learn some important tips for white-water rafting safely down the Rio Grande. First of all, I will hand out **life preservers** and helmets to everyone.”



Jake rolled his eyes. As she looked at him, Jamila wondered who was right, her cousin or the guide.

“Some people dismiss the seriousness of safety protocols, but the truth is that rafting can actually be quite risky,” the guide said.

“I understand some of you are from Nebraska,” she continued. “Welcome to Texas. Here in the Lone Star State we have mountains where it snows in winter. When the snow melts, the water runs into our rivers—like this one, the Rio Grande. And you’re very lucky, because there was a lot of snowfall this winter, which means there is a lot of runoff, so the river is moving fast!”



Jamila was confused. The river had looked slow, more like a creek or a stream, certainly not like white-water rapids. Just then, her cousin Jake blurted out, “Are you kidding me? The water here is barely moving.”

“Here it’s slow, but you’ll be floating down the river to the Santa Elena Canyon,” the guide explained. “That’s where the white-water part of your trip will begin.”

The guide handed out plastic bags and maps to everyone. “Put your phones and maps in these to keep them dry,” she instructed.

The family split up. The first raft would carry Jamila, her brother Ben, her cousin Jake, and Uncle Nate. The second raft would carry Jamila’s mom, dad, Aunt Marian, and her cousin Theo. Aunt Marian headed for the raft. All it took was stepping in the wrong place to flip the raft, sending Aunt Marian into the river.

When Aunt Marian stood up, she was dripping and laughing. She took off her hat and helmet, turned her big cowboy hat upside down, and poured out about a gallon of water.

Marian may have been laughing, but the guide remained serious. "It's not that big of a deal to flip over here," she said, "but when you get to the white water, it can be dangerous.

"If you flip over," she continued, "immediately try to get out of the river. Don't worry if you lose cell phones or wallets. Just make sure you are safe. And remember, once your raft is moving fast, you won't be able to stop and help each other. If your raft turns over, safely get to shore and walk back."

She then explained how to paddle and how to keep the rafts away from rocks.

"You'll know when you enter the Santa Elena Canyon," she explained, "because you'll see the high rock walls. The water will start moving faster, and you'll have to paddle hard to avoid rocks!"



A Wild Ride

The guide helped Uncle Nate, Jake, Ben, and Jamila climb into the first raft. Then the guide went into the second raft with the others. And they were off!

“Look at all those different cacti,” said Ben as he pointed to a cluster on the shore. “This is a real desert.”

Soon, strange rock landforms began to appear. Jamila stared, amazed at the beauty of the rocks. Some forms were carved by wind, and some forms looked like piles of thin rock plates, all stacked on top of one another. The landscape was startlingly different than the one she was familiar with in Nebraska.



The guide used a **megaphone** so that everyone could hear her as she explained, “The rock formations around you right now were formed during the time of the dinosaurs. Hikers have even found **fossils** in this area.”

She continued, “There were also volcanoes in this area, so there is a lot of **volcanic** rock. In fact, there’s even a natural hot spring nearby. The heat from inside Earth warms the water in the hot spring. Many people enjoy swimming in the warm water.”

This water is so smooth and calm, Jamila thought. Not as exciting as I thought it would be. Maybe we should go swimming so we can have a little more fun.

“Some of the water we’re rafting on came from snow on mountains over there,” the guide said, pointing. “The mountains formed from the **lava** that poured out of the ancient volcanoes.”

