You are going to write the story of Ricky Thomas’ disappearance as a front-page article for a tabloid newspaper.

Re-read the Prologue and the relevant section of Chapter 8, up to where the Superintendent says, ‘Why doesn’t he ask for help?’ and answer the following questions. Some answers will provide important facts - who, when, where - others are background information for your article.

1. How old is Ricky?
2. Why was he in London?
3. Where did he disappear from?
4. What time of day was it when he went missing?
5. What was the weather like?
6. What was the name of the teacher supervising the trip?
7. What is the name of the church next to Trafalgar Square?
8. Trafalgar Square is famous for its fountains. What are the two other features that tourists come to look at?
9. What is the only clue that the police have?
10. How does Ricky look in the photo? You should be able to find three adjectives.

You now have enough information to write your article.
Step 1 is to draft your article.

Follow these tips for success:

**Headline**

Your article needs an excellent headline to catch the attention of the newspaper buying public. Tabloid newspapers favour the following types of headline:

a) One word in very large type, probably with an exclamation mark at the end, for example, **DISAPPEARED!**

b) A short, snappy alliterative headline, for example, **Trafalgar Trip Ends in Tears,** or

c) A longer headline that almost makes reading the article unnecessary, for example, **Thirteen-year-old vanishes on school trip to London!** Pick your style and write your headline.

Now follow the plan below and write a paragraph for each point.

**Paragraph 1**

News reporting is ‘top-heavy’. Unlike a fiction story that gradually reveals facts, a newspaper article gives the reader the facts first. This means that your first paragraph should have lots of information and should cover what has happened, who it happened to, where and when.

a) Make sure you use an attention-grabbing first sentence.

b) Use all of your writing skills.

c) Newspaper articles don’t usually contain very much description, but you should use strong verbs, a variety of sentence lengths, emotive statements, rhetorical questions etc. For example: **Are our children safe on the streets? Apparently not! Yesterday, thirteen year-old Ricky Thomas was snatched from under the nose of the teacher entrusted with his care.**

**Paragraph 2**

You should include some background information in your article, describing for your readers where the incident took place, and possibly mentioning the weather.

For example: **The attractions of Trafalgar Square pull in the tourists, even on cold and rainy days ...**
Paragraph 3

You should include comments from some of the people involved with Ricky, for example:

a) The police. They would not want to give too much away - ‘We are pursuing several lines of enquiry…’

b) His mum. She might be hysterical, blaming the school, or cross with Ricky for getting himself abducted - “My poor son. How could anybody do this? I hope he is being fed…”

c) His headteacher. A neutral comment - “He is a good lad, well-liked by all of his teachers…”

d) Mr Watkins. He may be defensive - “How can a couple of staff be expected to supervise that many kids?”

e) The police haven’t found any eyewitnesses; as an ace reporter you may have been able to track down somebody who saw the undertaker’s van, and an unsteady person being helped into it.

Paragraph 4

You could end your article with a plea from Ricky’s mum, a comment from the police and a telephone number for anyone who has any information, or a critical comment about supervision of young people on school trips.

One final tip

Remember to use the information from the questions on Student Sheet 1 and refer to the book for more details.

After you’ve done your first draft

Tidy up your work, and cut out any irrelevant or dull parts. Check your spelling and punctuation. Revise your headline if necessary. Write your article out using columns, and include at least one picture with a suitable caption.
Teacher’s sheet

Students could be given the opportunity to word-process their work using Microsoft Word or Publisher or Teachit Publisher. Students could find suitable pictures using the internet.

Answers to questions:

1. Ricky is 13.
2. He is in London on a school trip.
3. He disappeared from Trafalgar Square.
4. It was morning.
5. The weather was cold and rainy.
6. Mr Watkins.
8. The bronze lions and Nelson’s Column. (A statue of Henry Havelock is also mentioned.)