



A GIRL'S GUIDE^{TO} SPYING

HOLLY WEBB

AGES 8+
DISCUSSION NOTES
AND ACTIVITIES



This resource pack offers a selection of discussion prompts, activities and creative tasks designed to support the teaching of *A Girl's Guide to Spying* in the classroom, school library or book group setting.

It is suitable for UKS2 and KS3 and supports cross-curricular links with English, History, Art and PSHE.

READ THIS BOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

- Girl Guides and Empowerment – learning skills, confidence and independence
- Courage and Bravery – facing danger and responsibility during WW1
- Mystery and Spying – codes, observation and uncovering secrets
- Historical Context – life in 1915 London, gender roles and wartime society
- Friendship and Teamwork – collaboration, loyalty and support

BEFORE READING...

BOOK COVER CLUES

Look closely at the cover and answer:

- What do you notice first?
- What does the title *A Girl's Guide to Spying* suggest about the story?
- Who do you think the main characters are, and what might they be doing?
- What time period or setting do you think the story is set in? How can you tell?
- Based on the cover and title, what challenges or mysteries might the characters face?

KEY HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you already know about WW1 and the role of women during the war?
2. What do you know about Girl Guides and what they do?

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT

London, 1915: The city faced air raids, food shortages and strict rules for women and girls. People lived in fear and suspicion. Girl Guides helped at home and in the community – and some were secretly involved in wartime intelligence.





GETTING INTO CHARACTER...

Think about times you've needed to:

- Be brave or face a challenge
- Notice small details
- Work as part of a team



How might these skills help the characters in this story?

OPTIONAL MINI-SPY TASK

- Imagine you are a WW1 Girl Guide on a secret mission.
- Pick a person, object, or area to watch for one minute.
- Write three clues a fellow spy could use to identify it.
- Bonus: make one clue tricky to test your partner's observation skills

DURING READING...

1. SPY NOTEBOOK: CHARACTER & SKILLS TRACKER

As you read, record key characters and the skills they develop. Focus on observation, teamwork, courage and secrecy.

TABLE HEADERS:

CHARACTER | ROLE IN THE STORY | KEY SKILLS & TRAITS | EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXT

OPTIONAL SKETCH SPACE





2. READING QUESTIONS

Select 1–2 questions from each section to discuss or record notes from the story

GIRLGUIDING & SKILLS

- What skills do the girls learn through Girlguiding? Note a scene that shows each.
- How might these skills help them solve problems later?

LIFE IN WARTIME LONDON

- What details show fear, danger or disruption? Record quotes or examples.
- How do attitudes towards others change during the war?

GENDER & EXPECTATIONS

- What are girls expected not to do? How do the girls challenge these rules?

SPYING & SECRECY

- Why is secrecy important in the story?
- Who is trusted – and who is not? Why? Predict what might happen because of this.

OPTIONAL NOTES SPACE





AFTER READING...

CREATIVE SPY MISSIONS

Complete these classroom activities to explore the key themes of the book.

SPY MISSION 1: PLAY KIM'S GAME

BACKGROUND

Girl Guides were trained to notice small details. Spies relied on sharp observation and memory to spot danger and uncover secrets.

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Place 10–15 small objects on a tray (e.g. pencil, coin, key, ribbon, paper clip).
2. Allow players 30–60 seconds to study the tray.
3. Cover the tray. Remove, replace or swap one object.
4. Reveal the tray and challenge players to identify what has changed.

CHALLENGE LEVELS:

- Beginner: Remove one object
- Intermediate: Swap two objects' positions
- Expert: Change one object slightly (e.g. turn it upside down)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Which strategies helped you remember the objects?
- Why would this skill be useful for Girl Guides or spies?
- Which character in the book would be best at this challenge?





SPY MISSION 2: DESIGN A GIRL GUIDE BADGE FOR TODAY

TASK: Design a brand-new Girl Guide badge that could exist today, inspired by the skills and values in *A Girl's Guide to Spying*.

YOUR BADGE MUST INCLUDE:

- A name (e.g. Observation Expert, Code Cracker, Community Helper)
- A symbol or image
- A short description of what the badge represents
- Three tasks someone would need to complete to earn it

THINK ABOUT:

- What modern skills matter now?
- How are today's challenges different from 1915?
- Which values from the book still feel important?

DISPLAY IDEA: CREATE A CLASS "GUIDE BADGE WALL" SHOWING ALL DESIGNS.

SPY MISSION 3: QUOTE DETECTIVES

At the start of each chapter, the author uses real-sounding quotes from:

- Newspapers
- Government announcements
- The Girl Guides' Gazette
- The Handbook for Girl Guides

Complete the table on the following page!

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Which quote surprised you the most? Why?
- Which quote did you like the least or disagree with?
- Which ideas about girls or women feel outdated?
- Which ideas still matter today?

CHALLENGE: REWRITE ONE QUOTE AS A MODERN HEADLINE OR SOCIAL MEDIA POST.



SPY MISSION 3 TASK: CHOOSE THREE DIFFERENT QUOTES FROM THE BOOK AND INVESTIGATE THEM.

QUOTE	SOURCE	WHAT IT REVEALS ABOUT THE TIME	IS IT STILL RELEVANT TODAY?



SPY MISSION 4: SURVIVING LONDON, 1915

BACKGROUND

London in 1915 was under pressure. Air raids, shortages, suspicion and strict expectations shaped daily life – especially for women and girls.

TASK: Create a “Day in the Life” profile for a girl living in WW1 London.

STEP 1: Choose a Role

• GIRL GUIDE • FACTORY WORKER • SCHOOLGIRL • SHOP ASSISTANT • NURSE-IN-TRAINING

STEP 2: Complete the Profile

DAILY LIFE	CHALLENGES & FEARS	GENDER EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Typical routines and duties- Rules or restrictions affecting behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Shortages, danger or family impacts- Community attitudes to German spies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What girls were expected or discouraged from doing?- Compare this to what the girls achieve in the book



FINAL TASK:

Write a short advice leaflet titled:
How to Stay Safe (and Sensible) in Wartime London

DISCUSSION:

How does fear change the way people treat one another?

SPY MISSION 5: INSIDE MO5

BACKGROUND

In *A Girl's Guide to Spying*, the girls become involved with MO5, the secret intelligence organisation that later became MI5. Its headquarters were at Watergate House in London – an ordinary-looking building hiding extraordinary secrets.

TASK: Create a recruitment checklist for MO5 in 1915.

INCLUDE:

- Skills MO5 would value (from the book)
- Qualities they might not trust
- Reasons girls and women were overlooked
- Why MO5 might secretly rely on girls anyway

PRESENT THIS AS:

- A bullet-point list, or
- A short internal memo titled “Recruitment Considerations – Confidential”

DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

- Why do you think intelligence organisations rarely advertise their work?
- How does the book challenge ideas about who is “useful” in wartime?
- Would the girls have been taken seriously without the cover of secrecy?

