

The *New York Times* bestselling series **CITY SPIES**

By Edgar Award–Winning Author James Ponti

Classroom Guide and Activity Booklet

INTRODUCTION

The bestselling City Spies series is a fun and educational addition to any classroom, either as an all-class read or an independent reading recommendation. With this series, your students can identify with kid spies and both their official and interpersonal quandaries, solve clever mysteries, and travel around the world—all while learning right here in your classroom! Along with author James Ponti, Simon & Schuster has put together this digital dossier with tools for educators to read and enjoy the City Spies series with their classrooms.

And don't forget to watch author James Ponti and educator Rose Brock discuss the series and this dossier in the video enclosed in this folder!

ABOUT THE SERIES

The City Spies books will take your students all across the globe on top secret missions that could mean life or death—and everything depends on the actions of a handful of kid spies. Our main character Sara Martinez, better known by her code name “Brooklyn,” gets pulled into a secret organization, the City Spies, due to her superior hacking skills. The City Spies is a secret division of MI6 that is made up entirely of spies ranging from eight to fifteen! And almost immediately, Brooklyn and her four fellow City Spies are roped into a dangerous mission to save the world...and finish their homework.

The City Spies series is jam-packed with action and intrigue, humor, and heart, and all set against a backdrop of exotic locations and iconic landmarks. With the help of this guide, your students can constructively discuss the plots, mysteries, and interpersonal relationships within the stories and enjoy collaborating on creative spy-themed activities as well! So, what are you waiting for? Let's get started!

INSIDE THIS BROCHURE YOU'LL FIND

- Discussion Questions • Activities
- Real Life Spies Dossiers • Spy Glossary
- Links & Additional Resources

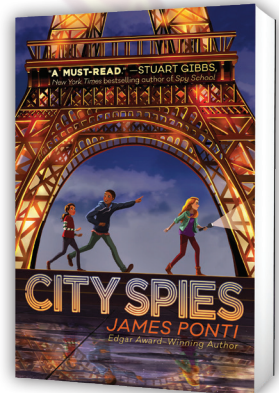
This mission is hot!

The **CITY SPIES** are a go!



CITY SPIES: Discussion Questions

1. As chapter one opens, readers meet Sara, a twelve-year-old hacker from Brooklyn waiting to learn her fate in Kings County Family Court. What are your predictions about the circumstances that have brought Sara to this place? Give examples from the text that led you to these conclusions.
2. Randall Stubbs, the public defender assigned to Sara, tells her, "It doesn't matter what you were trying to do. All that matters is what you did." Do you agree with Stubbs's assessment? Does knowing what inspired Sara's actions make a difference, even if she ultimately broke the law? Explain your answers. Can you think of any examples where understanding someone's intentions is as important as knowing the outcome?
3. Sara explains that it would be challenging to trust someone whose name you don't really know. Gerald Anderson responds by saying, "It all depends on the situation ... but my friends and colleagues, and I do hope that's a group you'll soon consider yourself to be a part of, they all call me Mother." Are you surprised to find out that this is his nickname? Why might Mother be inclined to have his friends and colleagues call him by this moniker? What are some of the traits often associated with mothers that Mother might demonstrate?
4. Mother tells Sara that "Only fools and liars speak with certainty about things beyond their control." What do you think he means by this? How might you apply this advice to your own life?
5. Describe Sara. What are three things you find most interesting about her? Is she someone you could see yourself befriend? How do you think others who don't know her well might view her? Explain your answers.
6. Consider how each City Spies member contributes to MI6. Why do you think they're so eager to work there? What about their past experiences make them well suited for the job? Do you think there are different expectations put on them based on age? Do you think that's fair or unfair? Explain your answers.
7. When Sara, Sydney, and Mother visit Sara's former foster home to retrieve her things, Sara takes it upon herself to lock the Clarks on the roof as payback. Mother states, "That wasn't part of the plan." Sara tells him that as the "alpha," she gets to be in charge now that they're operational. What are some of the lessons Mother learns about Sara from this practice mission? Does this foreshadow anything that happens later?
8. The Clarks will no longer have foster children under their care, and they are also being investigated by the New York Office of Children and Family Services. Mother tells Sara, "I know you're not familiar with it, but this is what justice feels like. This is what we're all about." Do you think justice is important to someone like Sara? Do you think there can be more than one form of justice? Explain your answers.



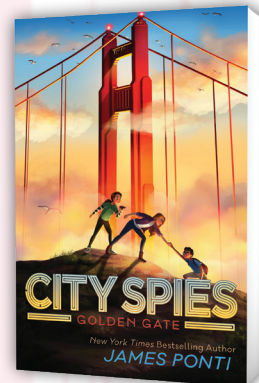
9. Sara's new team initiates her first test. Why do you think the others find this necessary? What does Sara ultimately prove to them?
10. Though a part of her will always be Sara, how does transitioning to her new identity as "Brooklyn" allow Sara to reinvent herself? Can you think of any other benefits to this new identity? What would your code name be?
11. After meeting Olivia in Sydney, Australia, where she's about to be expelled from school, Olivia tells Mother, "You don't have to be part of a group to understand that they're being mistreated. Justice doesn't require a membership card. Just a sense of right and wrong." Do you agree with this statement? Can you think of some creative ways you can fight for what you believe to be right? Share your ideas with others.
12. Discuss Kat's reaction to Sara's arrival. Do you think Kat's behavior is appropriate? Why might this change be difficult for her?
13. Consider the individual City Spies: Which character did you like the most or the least? For what reasons? Whom did you feel was most similar to you? Explain your answers.
14. Mother tells his team, "You can't look out if you stand out." Consider these "Motherisms," or little sayings that Mother invents to help his team remember key spycraft principles. Can you think of any other useful tips that might assist the City Spies? What do you think are the biggest dangers? How can they work to try to avoid them?
15. Which parts of Sara's life can you relate to? Which feel unique to her? What do you predict will be the most interesting changes in her life as she joins Mother and continues to assist the team?
16. How do Mother's interventions profoundly impact and change the lives of each of his charges? Do you think being part of a team influences their behavior? What makes someone a good teammate? Explain your answers.
17. Why is learning that Mother is looking for his wife, Clementine, and his children important? What do you think motivates Clementine's behavior? Why does she not want Mother to continue his search?
18. Describe some of the specific ways in which Umbra exercises its power. In your opinion, what makes this organization so dangerous? How does learning that they tried to kill Mother impact the City Spies? In what ways does this change their mission?
19. Sydney believes fighting injustice as a member of MI6 is an incredible opportunity and jumps at the chance to help train Brooklyn (Sara). What are the most important skills Sydney and the others can offer Brooklyn? What does Brooklyn ultimately prove to each of them? Explain your answers using examples from the text.
20. Considering the novel's conclusion, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of the City Spies series?





GOLDEN GATE: Discussion Questions

1. As *Golden Gate* opens, Brooklyn and Sydney are on a mission aboard the *Sylvia Earle*; they ultimately thwart the nefarious plans of the would-be hijackers working for Umbra that attempt to capture and ransom the two daughters of important British citizens. Analyze Brooklyn and Sydney's actions and reactions to this attempted kidnapping. What do you learn about them based on how they approach this challenge?
2. When a hijacker aboard the *Sylvia Earle* tells the girls there's no time for beauty, Brooklyn berates him by retorting, "That crack about makeup. You think because we're girls all we care about is our appearance? Is that it? That's really sexist." In your opinion, is Brooklyn's assessment of this statement accurate? Explain your answer.
3. In *City Spies*, readers learn that Mother has been looking for his wife and children for a long time. In *Golden Gate*, Mother and the team discover more clues regarding his family's whereabouts and Clementine's possible motivations for taking and hiding their children. Though Clementine has instructed him to stop investigating, why does Mother seem unable to call off his search for Clementine and his kids? Do you believe his search impacts the City Spies? If so, in what ways?
4. When Brooklyn asks Blix how he knows her age, he tells her, "I have three teenage daughters. I know what twelve-year-old girls look like." He stops for a moment before adding, "And I know exactly how tricky they can be." Do you agree with his assessment? How do you think adults tend to view young people? Explain your answers.
5. In *Golden Gate*, Umbra, a global crime syndicate, is once again engaged in terroristic activities, motivated by money. What makes them so dangerous to the City Spies and the world at large?
6. Assigned to protect two girls while on the *Sylvia Earle*, Brooklyn is known as Christina Diaz. Her cover identity is created by the British Secret Intelligence Service's MI6 and is the name of a beloved writer for children. If you had a chance to have a cover identity, would you want one? If so, what name would you use and why?
7. After stunning Alice and Judy with her ability to bring down a hijacking goon, Alice incredulously asks Brooklyn if she's an "MI6 asset." Brooklyn says, "We're not going to worry about what I am." Given what you know about this particular mission and the City Spies in general, why is it so important that their existence remain top secret? What do you think would be the toughest part of keeping that secret?
8. As Mother criticizes Sydney for her conduct during their mission, she snaps, "It's not like I left them alone. They still had Queen B looking after them ... What was that you called her on our last mission? A natural spy. The best you'd ever seen?" What is it about Brooklyn that makes Sydney and the others so jealous? Why do you think they feel this way? How might they deal with these feelings? Explain your answers.
9. "FARM" life for the City Spies includes competitions for fastest safecracking, obstacle course completion in near total darkness, building the most powerful explosive out of ordinary household objects, and memorizing long strings of numbers and letters. In the novel, readers discover the FARM as a place "where being a kid and being a spy went hand in hand." In your opinion, what would be the coolest part of getting to be a City Spy? What do you see as the greatest challenges to this dual lifestyle? Explain your answers.

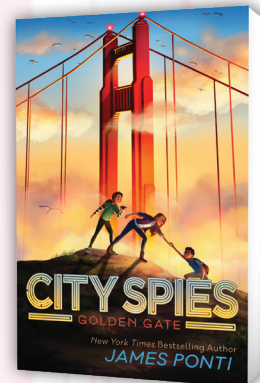


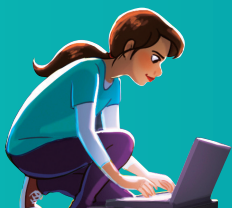
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10. At its heart, *City Spies* is a story about family. What textual evidence from *Golden Gate* supports this statement? How does this found family remind you of your own? What are some ways in which they are unique or complicated?
11. Starting with her actions on the *Sylvia Earle*, Sydney begins to doubt her contributions and value to the City Spies team. Do you agree or disagree with her views? What important skills do you think she offers the group?
12. Based on what you learn in *Golden Gate* and your impressions from *City Spies*, who is your favorite spy? What is it about this particular character that makes you admire them? Give examples from the books to support your answers.
13. Consider the secret mission the City Spies believe Mother and Brooklyn are engaging in: Do you agree or disagree with Mother's decision to involve Brooklyn in the search for his family? Support your position. Do you think he will ever stop looking for them?
14. Clementine provides Mother with a picture of their children on a flash drive. Kat tells the group that it's difficult to understand why Clementine has done this, because they're "only seeing caterpillars" when they also have to see the cocoon, or how things fit together. How does Kat's unique way of understanding relationships help the group better understand what they need to do?
15. When discussing the awkwardness between them, Brooklyn tells Sydney, "I'm the one who's trying to fit in. I'm the outsider joining a team that's thick as thieves. You guys have been together for years, and you were the second one, so that makes you an OG. I'm the noob. And after all you and I have been through these last few months, I thought we fit in together. I thought we were friends." Were you surprised to learn Brooklyn feels this way? Do you think it was difficult for her to share this? Have you felt similar to Brooklyn or to Sydney in your own life? Explain your answers.
16. Brooklyn shares all she knows about Gilson, who then asks Brooklyn about her real identity. Brooklyn tells her, "I'm the twelve-year-old girl who's running circles around you." Why do you think Gilson has such a difficult time understanding how Brooklyn gained knowledge of her transgressions and crimes?
17. In *Golden Gate*, Tru tells Brooklyn and Sydney, "Mother thinks of you all first as children, and that's good. He should do that. But it's my job to think of you first as agents. And the two of you are very good agents." Given their actions on recent missions, how do the two of them continue to prove themselves to Tru? Do you think this will inspire M16 to utilize them more often in missions to come? Explain your answers using examples from the book.
18. After capturing Brooklyn, Magpie screams, "You idiot! Now they know exactly where we are," to which Gilson retorts, "They're just kids." Magpie responds by slamming Brooklyn's phone on the floor and stomping on it, declaring, "They are very much not *just kids*." Why do you think Magpie and Gilson have such different understandings of who they are dealing with?
19. After Kat declares that she has sent out 3,797 emails, Paris remarks that this number is random. Kat retorts and declares, "Nothing I do is random. It's a left-and-right-truncatable prime number. Primes do for me what carne asada burritos do for Rio." What makes Kat such a vital part of the City Spies? How do the team's skills supplement one another?
20. Considering the novel's conclusion, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of *City Spies*?





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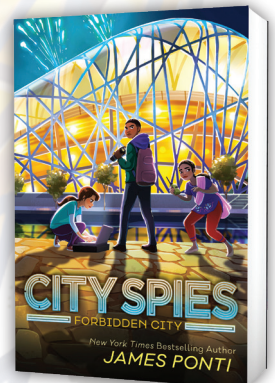
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FORBIDDEN CITY: Discussion Questions

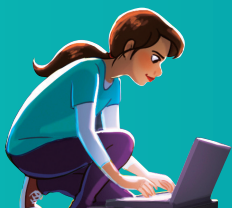
1. As *Forbidden City* opens, readers learn that while Paris was born in Rwanda, grew up in Paris, and now lives in the UK, he has learned to “blend in and disappear.” Why is this skill such an essential one for someone like him?
2. Kat reminds readers that while spies in movies may have extravagant getaway vehicles, she and Paris are utilizing a bright red double-decker bus to escape from their job. Do you find this unusual? What can be learned about the reality of their work from this conversation? In what ways does riding on a classic London bus connect with the larger lore of espionage?
3. While discussing the fictional British boy band KB5, Paris tells Brooklyn that “calling what they do music is an offense to everyone from Beethoven to the Beatles.” Do you feel his assessment is appropriate? Why or why not? From your reading, what did you discover about the group? Do you believe teen stars are judged too harshly?
4. Consider the mission to return the Fabergé egg to Sir Reginald Banks’s home. In what ways is this assignment particularly unique?
5. In *Forbidden City*, Brooklyn isn’t actively included in most of the mission, due to her academic struggles and her need to attend a summer program to catch up. Why does this decision make her doubt her place on the team and in their family?
6. In *Forbidden City*, Umbra, a global crime syndicate, is once again engaged in terroristic activities and is working with billionaire Sir Reg. What continues to make Umbra and their associates so dangerous to the City Spies and to the world at large? Why do you think individuals like Sir Reg are willing to work with organizations like this one?
7. For this mission, Paris serves as the alpha, or leader, at the beginning and remains an essential operative throughout. What skills or strengths does he bring to the operation? Based on textual examples, are there any specific ways he proves he was the right choice?
8. This installment of the City Spies series focuses on self-identity or how these young people view themselves individually and their roles in the larger group. What examples from *Forbidden City* can you find that supports this statement? What are some specific ways in which the members of the City Spies have a greater self-awareness of who they are?



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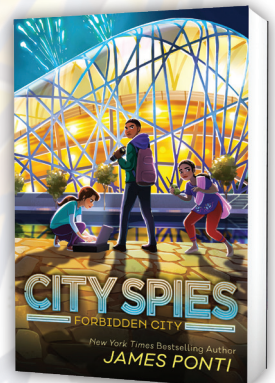
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9. Consider Sydney's assignment to serve as a reporter for *All Roads Lead to Audrey* as a means of staying close and monitoring the activities of Sir Reg by shadowing his daughter Tabitha. Do you see Sydney as the best candidate for this part of the mission? What important skills does Sydney have to offer? What might be the biggest obstacles for such an assignment?
10. At school, Brooklyn befriends Charlotte, a classmate that once lived at FARM and was a member of the City Spies before she was removed. What makes this new friendship so complicated?
11. Given what you know about this mission and the City Spies in general, why is it so vital for the young spies to maintain their secrecy?
12. In your opinion, what makes the Sorokin family such dangerous individuals? Offer specific examples from the novel to support your position.
13. Based on what you learn through reading *Forbidden City* and your impressions from other books in the series, who is your favorite spy on the team or the character you identify with most? What is it about this specific character that makes you admire them?
14. While discussing her former life at FARM and the espionage and missions in which she played a part, Charlotte tells Brooklyn, "Sometimes I miss the excitement ... it was fun being in on a secret. I miss being friends with everyone. I miss that terribly." What can be inferred by Charlotte's confession? Why does learning that Mother has adopted the City Spies wound her?
15. In *Forbidden City*, part of their mission requires a visit to China, where Mother and Paris visit both the Great Wall and Bird's Nest Stadium (officially known as Beijing National Stadium). Compare and contrast these two architectural structures. What do you believe these two treasures of China symbolize?
16. In the novel, readers discover that Jin-sun, a prominent North Korean nuclear physicist, wants to defect from his country with his son, Dae-jung. Considering the danger and consequences of such an action, why would an individual risk doing so? What does Jin-sun hope to gain for himself and his child?
17. Considering the conclusion of *Forbidden City*, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of City Spies?



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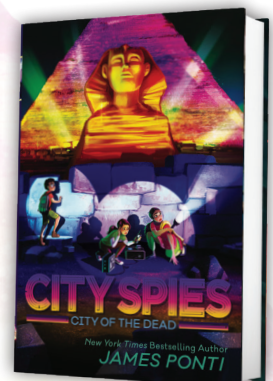


CITY OF THE DEAD: Discussion Questions

1. As *City of the Dead* opens, readers discover that the City Spies team, much like archaeologist Howard Carter, “were looking to recover treasures of Egyptian antiquity. Except they weren’t going to dig a tunnel in the desert. They were going to sneak through one in an abandoned section of the London Underground. And the artifacts they sought weren’t concealed in some long-forgotten tomb. They were on display at one of the busiest museums in the world. This was no excavation. It was a heist.” (Chapter one) Does discovering that the spies might actually be up to a nefarious deed surprise you? In your opinion, does learning how the team is being utilized feel like a good choice by MI6? If so, in what ways? What does the City Spies team’s fresh perspective offer to the intelligence agency?
2. Though the timing of their mission feels less important for the rest of the team, readers learn that “for Sydney, a born rebel who loved ‘making things go boom,’ it was as if Bonfire Night had been created specifically with her in mind. And here she was in London, so close to some of the biggest celebrations in the country, yet she was going to miss out.” (Chapter one) Consider Kat’s choice as the mission leader to time their work during this celebratory evening. What do you think of this choice, and in what ways does it serve the mission’s goals? Is she right to be less considerate of Sydney’s disappointment? Explain your answer.
3. Based on what you’ve learned previously from the other City Spies adventures, what makes this Kat-led mission important? In what ways is this assignment unique? What skills or strengths does Kat bring to the operation? Based on textual examples, in what ways does Kat prove she was the right choice?
4. As you consider the reaction of the security team at the British Museum, why do you think adults have such a difficult time dealing with the reality that, at times, kids may know better than adults? What are other ways this is evident throughout the novel?
5. In *City of the Dead*, it is discovered that Umbra, a global crime syndicate, remains engaged in and supporting terroristic activities, like hacking and hijacking critical state infrastructure. What makes this criminal organization so difficult to shut down? How does knowing that Clementine is likely entrenched in their organization impact Mother and the rest of the City Spies?
6. Consider the City Spies’ mission-go phrase: “This operation is hot. We are a go.” In what ways is using a consistent tagline helpful to the team? Are there any additional taglines or phrases you would offer them?
7. After hearing Rio offer critical details about a guard he’s observed, Sydney tells him, “It’s scary how well you read people.” (Chapter one) Though he appreciates the compliment, Rio is quick to point out that his skills aren’t always noticed or appreciated by their team. From your perspective, do you agree, or do you believe Rio is being too sensitive? Why might each of the team feel like what they offer isn’t given the attention they deserve?

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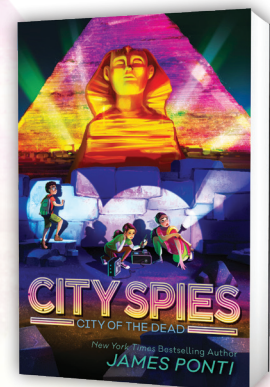
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8. Though she does it to cause a distraction, Sydney brings up the controversy around the Rosetta Stone and the British acquisition and “ownership” of cultural heritage objects from lands they colonized or as items they acquired as spoils of war. Why is this an important issue? Can you think of any similar artifacts you’ve seen in museums or displays that likely belong elsewhere in the world? Had you considered how that particular museum came to own the item? If you didn’t, might you feel differently seeing them now? Explain your answer.
9. As they try to problem-solve on the spot during a complication in their mission, Sydney asks, “What’s that Motherism? You’re at your best . . . ?” “When you trust the rest,” Kat finishes for her. (Chapter four) Why is it so important for the group to remember that trust in their team is what matters most? How might things look differently if working together as a team wasn’t essential to what they do?
10. In *City of the Dead*, the City Spies are stunned to see Robert choose to return to Mother and their new family. From your perspective, what are the greatest challenges each of them will face with his arrival? Consider Mother’s reaction to his return. Do you believe he is truly able to be objective about Robert’s motivations? Why or why not?
11. Given what you know about this particular mission, and the City Spies in general, why does MI6 elect to continue keeping knowledge of their existence top secret? What benefits do you see for them being more transparent about FARM and the team’s work?
12. As their investigation continues, Brooklyn is quick to defend one of the primary suspects in the case, a former hacker. Based on her own past experiences before joining the team, do you think she is being sensitive to the parallels of her own life?
13. Based on what you learn through reading *City of the Dead* and your impressions of the City Spies throughout the series so far, who is the character you most identify with and why?
14. As the City Spies attempt to stop Harper, they learn that Marwen, their Egyptian tour guide, isn’t allowed to accompany them down into the site. He tells the team, “I will be wherever you need me.” (Chapter thirty-six) Given all that has happened throughout their time in Egypt, what makes Marwen’s efforts so unusual? Provide some examples that could explain his abilities.
15. Trust is a critical component in the City Spies family. How does Robert’s sudden inclusion in their team cause the others to react? From your perspective, do you think he is treated fairly? Explain your position.
16. Considering the conclusion of *City of the Dead*, what do you predict could happen in the future for the City Spies?
17. Considering the conclusion of *Forbidden City*, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of City Spies?





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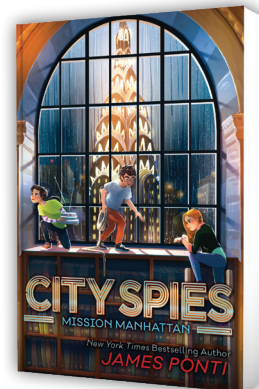
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MISSION MANHATTAN: Discussion Questions

1. As *Mission Manhattan* opens, readers are told that from Cairo's perspective, "Spy missions were nothing like spy movies." Do you think he's probably correct? Based on what you've observed in films and television shows, how are spies generally depicted? In what ways are these portrayals unlike the City Spies and their experiences?
2. While sharing his discomfort in his disguise to do mission work, Paris—"who wore a matching outfit and was smearing black and yellow greaspaint" on his face—tells Cairo, "When it comes to spycraft, the bottom line is that comfort takes a backseat to blending in." (Chapter one) Based on what you've observed from past missions and the one they are partaking in, why is blending in so critical for mission success?
3. Early in *Mission Manhattan*, readers learn that the City Spies have been sent to Venice, Italy, to the site of a protest organized by teen environmental activists. Beyond the intentions of the teen activists known as the Swarm, how does learning that young people can find ways to be seen and heard about causes they are committed to make you feel? What do you see as the biggest hurdles young people face while speaking up about things to which they are committed?
4. At the beginning of the mission, Kat is given the distinction of the mission alpha, which means she is charged with decision making for the team. Based on what you've learned about Kat from earlier books, what are the greatest skills Kat brings to this role? What might be the challenges she will face?
5. Consider the City Spies mission "go" phrase—"This operation is hot. We are a go." Why is getting to make this proclamation as a member of the team so thrilling, and what does it suggest about the person getting to do so?
6. During earlier assignments, Rio has often felt that his unique skills aren't always noticed or appreciated by the City Spies team. However, in this case, "Although Kat was the alpha, Rio had the most important assignment. He was supposed to get close to Beatriz and watch over her since she was the most likely target of any attack. For him, this was huge, not only because it was rare for him to get such an important responsibility, but also because he was a massive fan of hers." (Chapter one) How does Rio's work on this mission really change things for him? What are some of the ways his experiences in his former life as a street performer and
7. Based on what you learn through reading *Mission Manhattan* and on your impressions of the City Spies throughout the series so far, how would you describe each member of the team? Are there ways in which you believe they have grown and changed in their time together?



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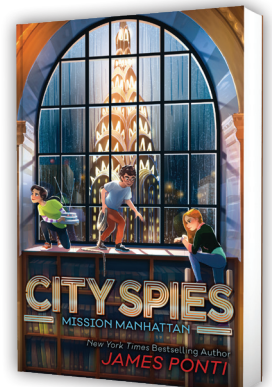
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MISSION MANHATTAN: Discussion Questions

8. As they share their nervousness due to lack of time to prepare for the Washington DC leg of this mission, Monty tells the team, “You all have the skills, and more importantly, you all have the right instincts. What’s the Motherism? *The essential part is that you trust your heart.* When the time comes, you’ll know what to do.” (Chapter seventeen) What do you believe makes Monty, Mother, and the rest of MI6 so confident in the abilities of the City Spies team?
9. Why do you believe MI6 has chosen to continue to keep knowledge of the City Spies’ existence and work a secret? How does Rio’s choice to reveal what the team does to Beatriz Santos potentially jeopardize this? Do you see any ways this could inadvertently put them in a position of danger? Are you surprised by MI6’s ultimate reaction to Rio’s actions regarding Beatriz?
10. While discussing Beatriz Santos during their visit to the Brazilian embassy, and focusing on how she’s recovering from the attempted attack on her in Venice, Beatriz’s advisor, Dr. Ferreira, tells Monty, “She’s put on a brave face and tried to act like it was nothing, but I know that it’s shaken her. . . . I encouraged her not to make this trip, but as you can tell, my advice went unheeded.” (Chapter eighteen) What does learning that Beatriz is struggling with what happened indicate? What can be gleaned from the knowledge that she is unwilling to allow her fears to get in the way of her mission?
11. In his most recent MI6 performance review, Mother is described as “meticulous” by Tru. “Cool” and “calm” were two other descriptions given about him. (Chapter nineteen) Thinking about what happens to him in *Mission Manhattan* and what he’s endured and experienced in earlier City Spies books, how would you describe Mother? What are the greatest trials you feel he has faced? How has he handled those challenges? Are there ways in which his experience during this mission might change him?
12. Readers learn, “As one of the most recognizable faces in the environmental movement, Beatriz was a polarizing figure. For those who supported her rainforest campaign, she was a hero, their Queen Bea. But to people who thought she was an extremist, Beatriz was a spoiled brat repeating simplistic views about a world that was more complicated than she understood.” (Chapter nineteen) As Beatriz attempts to further explain the complicated position of being famous and people wanting her to act her age, Rio witnesses this challenge she faces firsthand. Considering Beatriz’s explanation and what you observe in *Mission Manhattan*, do you see her position of celebrity as one that you’d want for yourself? What do you see as the greatest benefits and challenges to this level of fame?



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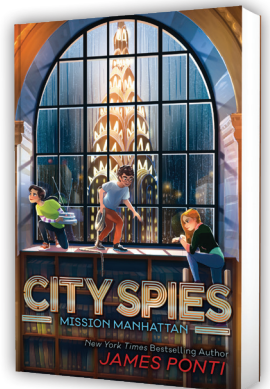
CITY SPIES

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MISSION MANHATTAN: Discussion Questions

13. Given what you learn from the novel about the main branch of the New York Public Library, what's your favorite feature of the library? If you had a chance to visit the facility, what would you want to visit first and why?
14. Brooklyn and the team visit her former foster mother to hide out as they are being sought by the authorities. There, Mrs. G tells Brooklyn, "Like I said, Sara, some things never change. . . . You've always been on the edge of trouble." (Chapter thirty-five) In your opinion, is this a fair assessment of Brooklyn? Why or why not?
15. For Brooklyn, what are some ways in which the return to her former home of New York City for the team's final leg of the mission might feel complicated? How does her local knowledge ultimately help them stay safe and achieve their goals?
16. Trust is a critical component in the City Spies family. How does Robert's choice to finally tell his new siblings the truth about his actions regarding Clementine help them better understand him and change the way they perceive him? From your perspective, do you think he is treated fairly? Explain your position.
17. Considering the conclusion of *Mission Manhattan* and what is learned about Clementine, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of City Spies?



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LONDON CALLING: Discussion Questions

1. As *London Calling* opens, readers witness an exchange between Annie and Gökçe, her closest friend in Istanbul. Gökçe tells Annie, “You are the most *paranoid* fifteen-year-old in the world,” to which Annie laughs and shares, “Okay. That’s fair. But believe me. If you came from my family, you’d be paranoid, too.” (Chapter one) Given what you know from previous *City Spies* installments about Annie, her brother, mother, and father, in what ways is this statement true? Beyond the obvious challenge of being the daughter of spies, from your perspective, what have been the biggest challenges for Annie and her brother, Robert, also known as Cairo?
2. After swim practice with Gökçe, Annie notices a man out of place, with a physique that indicates he is likely not a swimmer. After her friend suggests that he could be a mechanic from the shop situated close to the pool, Annie tells Gökçe, “Dressed like that? I don’t think so. Besides, look at his hands. They’re manicured. Not a spot of grease on them.” (Chapter one) What do Annie’s observations indicate about her situational awareness? How has being on the run with her mother and brother prepared her for such situations? How does this skill help her?
3. As she considers her relationship with Gökçe, Annie shares that it’s “been years since she’d had a friend this close. Someone she could *almost* be herself with. This was intentional because she knew she’d inevitably be forced to leave without warning or a chance to say goodbye.” (Chapter one) Why is Annie’s situation so difficult? Considering what Gökçe believes about Annie’s cover story, why is this also problematic? Do you believe Annie’s experiences with peers are easier or more difficult than what the *City Spies* experience? Explain your answer.
4. Early in the novel, readers learn that half of the *City Spies* team have been sent to Istanbul and then on to Rome in search of Annie, while the others stay at FARM to offer mission support, as well as focusing on their UK mission. What are some of the challenges of splitting their focus across multiple missions at once? What are some potential additional dangers presented based on this setup?
5. Cairo (Robert) is given the distinction of running the mission. Why does this seem important given that they are searching for his sister? Based on what you’ve learned about Cairo from earlier books, what are the greatest skills Cairo brings to this role? What might be some challenges he could face?
6. While debating the trustworthiness of Clementine and her actions, Kat shares that she believes her and finds her “very convincing,” to which Paris retorts, “The best spies always are.” (Chapter six) Given his past experiences and what he’s witnessed firsthand, why is Paris so unwilling to trust Clementine? How do you feel about Paris’s concerns about her? Explain why you think he is or is not justified in feeling this way.



LONDON CALLING: Discussion Questions

7. While considering why Umbra is targeting Annie, Mother tells them, "I think [Clementine] was a double agent working for MI6 while appearing to work with Umbra. I think the bad things she did were to make them believe that she was one of them. But it looks like she's blown her cover." (Chapter six) In what ways do Clementine's actions compromise her position with Umbra? Do you think she's right to risk her level of trust with them? Why or why not?
8. As Paris, Mother, and Cairo visit the pool where Annie trained, Paris finds a displayed team picture and looks for Annie, to which Cairo tells him, "You won't find her in there. First rule of living on the run. You're always sick on picture day." (Chapter seven) Though this strategic action makes sense, it also leaves Mother feeling guilty. Why is that? Do you think he's right to feel that way?
9. While in Türkiye searching for Annie as part of Operation Breadcrumbs, Mother and Cairo visit Annie's school, and Cairo makes it his mission to retrieve her diary. What does this intentional choice indicate about their relationship?
10. How does Mother react to learning that Annie was given the choice to stay with her mother, even after given the option to live with her father and brother?
11. Throughout the novel, the City Spies team playfully teases Rio because he considers himself to be an "epicure"—someone with a refined palate and appreciation of high-quality food. In what ways does he regularly contradict this?
12. Based on what you learn through reading *London Calling* and your impressions of the City Spies throughout the series so far, how would you describe each member of the team? How have they each grown and changed in their time together?
13. After Cairo tells her that he loves his new siblings, Annie tells him, "That makes me very happy." (Chapter twenty-eight) Does this surprise you? Why does knowing that her brother believes the other City Spies are his family matter so much to Annie?
14. Consider the events of *London Calling*: What are some of the ways in which Clementine's actions prove that all is not as it has appeared to the team? Do you think they should trust her? Why or why not?
15. As Annie volunteers to help her brother on the next stage of the mission, Mother tells her, "You have made it clear that you want no part of this." (Chapter twenty-eight) What does Annie have to gain by assisting on this mission?



LONDON CALLING: Discussion Questions

16. Given the infiltration of FARM, why do Brooklyn and Monty believe they need to destroy Beny, a Cray XC40 supercomputer used by MI6 for code-breaking and analysis? While destroying it means a loss for everyone, especially as the supercomputer is such a vital tool for the team, how is this a huge sacrifice for Brooklyn?
17. After Brooklyn is forced to destroy the supercomputer to protect the City Spies team, she believes that the texts she receives from Beny are either delayed sent messages or spoofing messages from Umbra, or even that Beny somehow survived and is rebuilding himself. Do you believe that last option to be a possible explanation? Why or why not? What do you think these texts mean for the future?
18. When Quill kicks the City Spies out of their safe house, Mother tells him, "I get that you're embarrassed . . . because grown men who you personally trained were unable to keep up with a group of kids. . . . So if you're angry, take it out on me. Not them." (Chapter thirty) How do you feel about Quill's reaction? In what ways is it surprising?
19. When Mother, Robert, and Annie finally get to see Clementine, she tells them "the key to survival is situational awareness." (Chapter thirty-two) In what ways does Clementine's advice ultimately pay off for them?
20. Considering the conclusion of *London Calling*, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of City Spies? In what significant ways have things changed for the team?





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EUROPA: Discussion Questions

1. Despite his incarceration in His Majesty's Prison Belmarsh High Security Unit (HSU), Lucien Allard remains a potent threat, capable of coordinating sophisticated psychological and physical operations via smuggled technology. What does learning that Lucien still has so much influence mean for Umbra and the City Spies?
2. Based on his interactions with guards and his Europa plan, discuss how Allard uses his passion for art and his mysterious reputation to maintain power even while in solitary confinement.
3. As the City Spies rush to meet Tru after she leaves them clues, Sydney prides herself on being the only one to meet Tru's noon deadline, to which Paris tells her, "Because we were helping all the people you almost knocked over . . . You know, spies are supposed to move in and out of the shadows, not over and through civilians." (Chapter three) Based on what you already know about her, what makes this expectation difficult for Sydney? What do you see as Sydney's greatest strengths and weaknesses?
4. During the first "Tru-torial" for the SOE (School of Espionage), Tru shares the story of Winston Churchill's creation of his SOE and his mandate for them "to set Europe ablaze" as he wanted agents to go behind enemy lines to wreak havoc and destruction for the Nazis. Tru continues by stating, "Despite the glamorous way it's portrayed in the movies, espionage is often ugly, dangerous work." (Chapter three) From what you've read about Tru, why do you think she's compelled to remind the team about this element of being a spy? What can be gleaned from her comments?
5. Tru shares that the idea came from C, the Chief of MI6, to give the team extra training because "you've dazzled him, and he wants to train you for more challenging assignments." (Chapter three) How does this revelation impact the City Spies? Do you agree with C's assessment of the team?
6. In Europa, Kat emphasizes the importance of using a numerical scale (the "Kat Scale") to assess probability. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using objective mathematical frameworks versus gut instinct in a high-pressure environment.
7. As they travel by subway on their mission, Paris recalls an important "Motherism" and reminds Sydney, "When there's something you can't find, put yourself in the hider's mind." In what ways does this lesson and the other "Motherisms" they've learned along the way shape the efforts of the City Spies?
8. A "curse of knowledge" occurs when an expert views information through their specific lens of expertise, assuming others share that perspective. Because of his art history background, how does Mother's curse of knowledge lead the team in the wrong direction?
9. The Musée d'Orsay is a source of history and pride for both Paris and France; what is its cultural significance to the rest of the world?
10. Though Mother orders Paris and Sydney to move back to a safe area when it's clear that the bomb will be detonating soon, Sydney tells him to go on while she insists on taking a look at the bomb with the time left, to which Paris tells her, "If you stay, I stay." What does Paris's response to Sydney reveal about their relationship? What does her refusal to follow Mother's orders reveal about her?



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EUROPA: Discussion Questions

11. Evaluate the team's actions at the Musée d'Orsay. In your opinion, was Sydney's decision to stay and attempt to defuse the bomb an act of heroism or a failure of discipline? Explain your position.
12. Consider the Operation Lazarus incident in Paris, which isn't the mass-casualty bombing it initially was feared to be. Why is the discovery of "Le Fantôme" comics on the bench in the Musée d'Orsay important and problematic? Why does this calculated act of vandalism, designed to demonstrate Umbra's reach, prove to be so worrisome?
13. Due to their arrest, Sydney and Paris have been permanently expelled from France, limiting the team's operational capacity for any Europa developments involving French soil. Why are the consequences of this part of the mission so dire, especially for Paris?
14. As they prepare for their journey back to London, Brooklyn shares, "I could live the rest of my life without stepping foot inside another Parisian train station." (Chapter fourteen) Based on what the team has been through, why do her words ring true? Are there ways that this part of the mission seems more difficult than others? If so, why?
15. Following the Paris incident, MI6 intercepts new messages from Allard's burner phone ordering a call to "Activate Europa," which implies that Umbra will execute simultaneous attacks in four major European cities in "more than a week and less than a month." (Chapter sixteen) How is this threat a greater challenge than any before for the City Spies team?
16. As he offers to stop the Europa attacks in exchange for a full pardon and entry into the protected persons program, Lucien Allard declares, "My heart has no goodness. I'm doing this in exchange for my freedom." (Chapter sixteen) Though they fear the outcomes if they can't stop Operation Europa, why does the MI6 leadership seem uninterested in considering this exchange? Hold a debate, or, as a class, list the pros and cons to agreeing to Allard's offer.
17. After Mother tells the team he won't lead them with a Motherism after being teased, Monty steps up and offers, "Leave no prints. Hide your face. Disappear, without a trace." (Chapter nine) How are Monty's words sage advice for this mission and their work in general?
18. How do the City Spies balance their unique personal skills with effective team collaboration through the events that unfold in the novel?
19. In what ways do the cryptic references to Shakespearean battlefields and the possible involvement of the high-level asset/double agent Clementine elevate the stakes even more in this mission?
20. Based on what you learn through reading Europa and your impressions of the City Spies throughout the series so far, how would you describe each member of the team? Are there ways in which you believe they have grown and changed in their time together?
21. Considering the conclusion of Europa, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of City Spies? In what significant ways have things changed for the team?



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Dossier Fill-in-the-Blank

NAME: _____
(YOUR CITY SPIES CODE NAME)

AGE: _____
(YOUR AGE)

BIRTHPLACE: _____
(LOCATION)



DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC:

_____ has an amazing quality that blends _____
(YOUR CITY SPIES CODE NAME) (ADJECTIVE)
with _____. Since the day they arrived at the _____,
(ADJECTIVE) (LOCATION)
they've been totally committed to everything they do, whether it's climbing up the outside of a wall to save a mission or pranking a friend by re-hemming his pants to make him think he was suddenly taller. If they were an emoji, they would be _____.
(A TYPE OF EMOJI)

CLASSIC MISSION MOMENT:

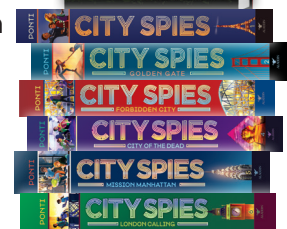
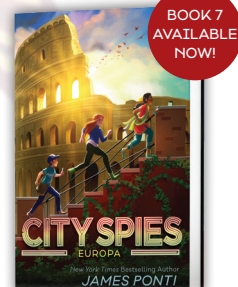
They once had to hack the computer of a particularly ruthless _____, and in
(A GROWN-UP YOU KNOW)
addition to stealing the files that MI6 needed, they changed the background on his monitor so that it permanently displayed _____ wearing _____ and
(NOUN) (A SILLY ARTICLE OF CLOTHING)
_____.
(ANOTHER SILLY ARTICLE OF CLOTHING)

HAPPY PLACE: Since moving to _____, they have become addicted
(LOCATION)
to watching _____ movies at night. They usually watch while munching
(TYPE OF MOVIE)
on a massive bowl of _____. They _____
(FOOD) (ACTION VERB)
along with the characters when they think no one else is watching.

SOMETHING ABOUT THEM THEY DON'T KNOW THAT I KNOW:

They use their incredible _____ skills to keep track of
(YOUR SPECIAL TALENT)
their former _____ and make sure they're doing okay in
(NOUN)
_____.

(LOCATION)





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JOIN THE CITY SPIES!

Directions: To become a spy, you have to fill out the paperwork. Below fill out the boxes with your code name, special skill, languages, and more. After that is done, you are part of the City Spies!

Add your picture or draw yourself here!

CODE NAME

AGE

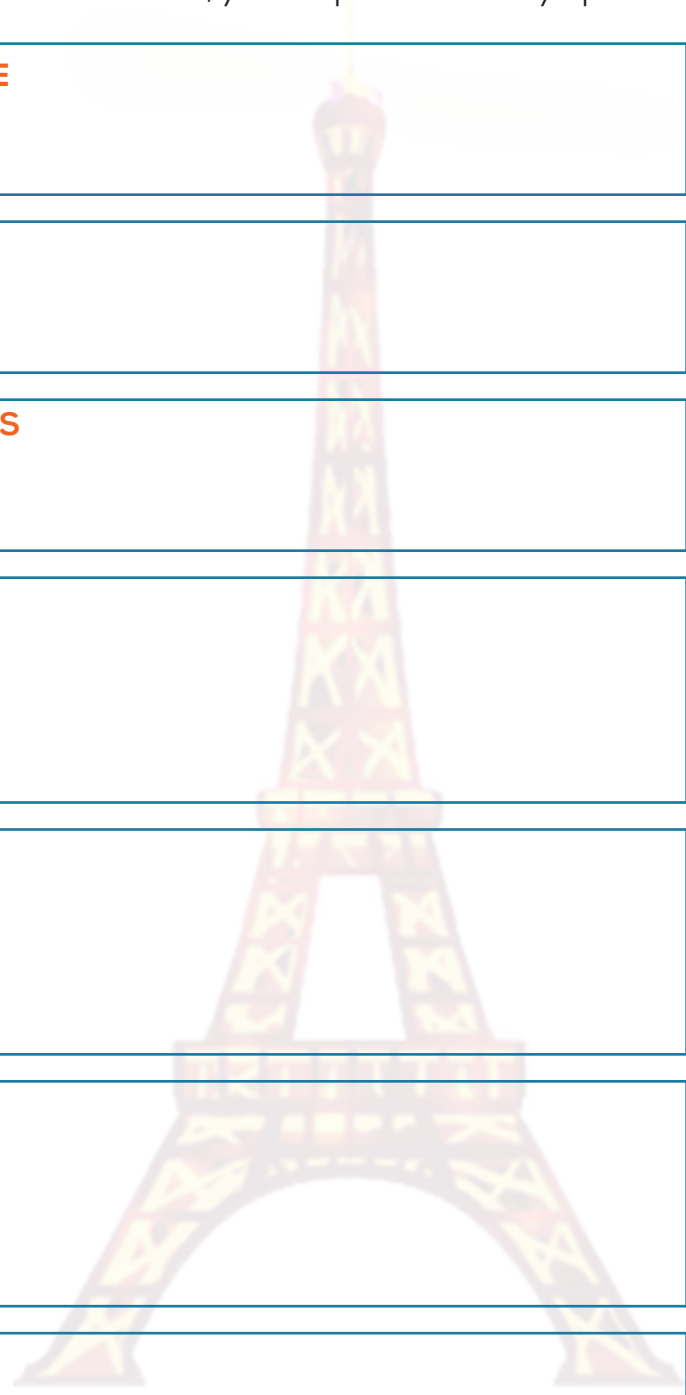
LANGUAGES

SPECIAL SKILL

LIKES

DISLIKES

HAPPY PLACE

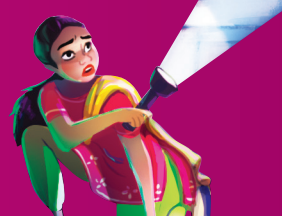


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City Spies Character Crossword

Use the clues to below to fill out the crossword puzzle with the names of the cast of City Spies.

1

2

3

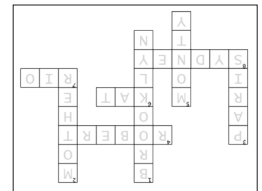
4

5

6

7

8



ANSWER:

CLUES:

ACROSS

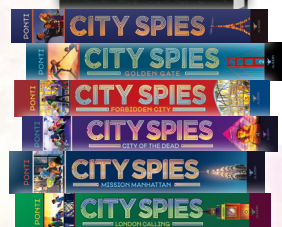
- 4. This new spy's code name is Cairo.
- 6. This spy is an incredible code breaker.
- 7. This spy is OBSESSED with food and is an amazing cook!
- 8. This spy is practically allergic to following rules.

DOWN

- 1. This spy is a hacker who has finally found her family in the City Spies.
- 2. This spy recruited everyone and has catch phrases named after him.
- 3. This spy saved another from a burning building.
- 5. This spy went to Oxford University...and was very helpful when the City Spies needed to break into an Oxford library.



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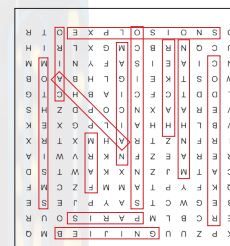
City Spies Character Word Search

Help the City Spies complete their mission by finding all the clue words in the word search below!



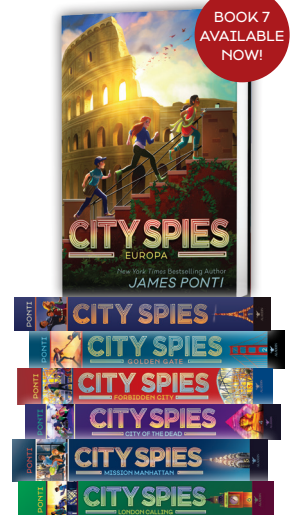
HACKER
EXPLOSIONS
ALPHA
MAGICIAN
CODE BREAKER
MOTHERISMS

FARM
PARIS
SAN FRANCISCO
BEIJING
CAIRO
MANHATTAN



ANSWER:

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CITY SPIES

REAL LIFE SPIES

Enrich your classroom discussion of CITY SPIES by learning about these real-life spies from history!



THE SPY-CATCHER

Name: Moe Berg

Date and place of Birth: March 2, 1902 (New York, New York)

Bio: Moe Berg played Major League Baseball as a catcher for several teams including the Chicago White Sox and Boston Red Sox. He also graduated from Princeton and spoke as many as eleven different languages. He began spying for the US government in 1934 when he traveled to Japan with a team of major league all stars including Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. During World War II, he worked with the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA.

WWII'S AMAZING CODE BREAKERS

Name: Alan Mathison Turing

Date and place of Birth: June 23, 1912 (Paddington, London)

Bio: Alan Turing was an English mathematician who served as a cryptologist during World War II. Working at Bletchley Park, Britain's top-secret code-breaking facility, he was essential to breaking the German's Enigma code. He is considered an important pioneer in the development of the computer.



THE ONE-LEGGED WWII SUPER SPY

Name: Virginia Hall

Date and place of Birth: April 6, 1906 (Baltimore, Maryland)

Bio: Virginia Hall was a secret agent during World War II. She wanted to spy for the Americans but was turned down because she was a woman and also because she had an artificial leg, which she named Cuthbert. Instead, she spied for the British and was one of the first female agents sent in to France to help sabotage the Germans. She was so effective that the Nazi secret police referred to her "the most dangerous of all Allied spies."



CITY SPIES

SPY GLOSSARY

Agent—Someone who secretly works for an intelligence service.

Asset—A source of secret information.

Brush Pass—The transfer of physical material, such as a document or file, during a brief physical interaction.

Burned—When an agent's true identity has been discovered. Also known as blown. **CIA**—The Central Intelligence Agency, the US government agency responsible for gathering intelligence outside the country.

Cipher—A system of coded communication in which letters are replaced with other letters or symbols as dictated by a key.

Clandestine—Something that is hidden or secret.

Cobbler—A person who assembles falsified documents that help a spy craft a cover identity.

Cover—The false identity created for an agent.

Cryptology—The science of codes and secret communication.

Culper Ring—A spy ring during the American Revolution that was run by George Washington.

Double Agent—An agent who pretends to be a spy for one country, but is actually working for another.

Dead Drop—A secret location used as a mailbox to pass messages between two spies.

Enigma—A highly effective cipher machine used by the Germans to communicate during World War II.

The FARM—The nickname of Camp Peary, the CIA's secret training facility in York County, Virginia. [This was the inspiration for the FARM in *City Spies*.]

Flaps and Seals—The secret opening, reading, and resealing of mail and other communication.

Hacker—Someone who breaks into computer programs and files to access secret information.

Handler—The person who supervises a spy or agent.

KGB—The Soviet Union's intelligence agency during the Cold War.

Legend—The detailed false backstory and biography created for an agent to go undercover.

MI6—The commonly used name for the Secret Intelligence Service, the United Kingdom's Intelligence agency. It's short for Military Intelligence, Section 6.

Mole—A spy or agent within an organization who is secretly working for and providing information to that organization's enemy.

NSA—The National Security Agency—the intelligence branch of the US Department of Defense.

Pocket Litter—Everyday items such as credit cards, receipts, money, and identification cards given to an agent that help support their cover and legend.

Safe House—A clandestine location that is considered a secure place for agents to meet and confer.

Sleeper—An agent who lives as an ordinary citizen for an extended period in a foreign country before becoming an active spy.

Station—A foreign office of a nation's intelligence agency.

CITY SPIES

LINKS & RESOURCES

General Spycraft

A CIA website for kids and teachers about spying.

<https://www.cia.gov/spy-kids>

The International Spy Museum is a great resource on spying and has fun activities and a great glossary.

<https://www.spymuseum.org/education-programs/spy-resources>

The Smithsonian has provided a great resource for teachers and students to learn about the Navajo Code Talkers from World War II.

<https://americanindian.si.edu/education/codetalkers/html/index.html>

An article from Time Magazine about the amazing American spy Virginia Hall.

<https://time.com/5566062/virginia-hall/>

World War II's greatest codebreaking effort took place outside of London at Bletchley Park. This site talks about what happened there.

<https://bletchleypark.org.uk/>

This article about Moe Berg, a major league baseball player turned spy was written for the Society for American Baseball Research.

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/moe-berg/>

City Spies

Father Hurricane

The City Spies named their computer after a Jesuit Priest in Cuba named Benito Viñes, known as Father Hurricane for his pioneering understanding of tropical storms in the late 19th century. Here is a brief weather channel article about him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfBSCdQBFbo>

Table Magic

Rio is a magician and frequently has to small tricks. I don't know magic so I'm often going on line looking for videos about how to do tricks. Here's one with 7 great tricks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alrBV5PO--s>

Eiffel Tower

This National Geographic Kids article has some great information and a video about the Eiffel Tower.

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/eiffel-tower>

While this Google Arts & Culture page has great photographs of the tours history plus articles that show how it was constructed. <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/tour-eiffel>

Catacombs

The City Spies take several trips into the catacombs beneath Paris. This two videos, one from the *New York Times* and one from the History Channel, are both about 4 minutes long and take you down into the catacombs.

New York Times - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClUcjJDetB8>

History Channel - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CfazQ2P8D8>

CITY SPIES

LINKS & RESOURCES

Roald Dahl

References are made throughout the book about future children's author Roald Dahl being a British spy. This article from Biography.com tells that story.

<https://www.biography.com/news/roald-dahl-spy-wwii-fighter-pilot-childrens-book-author>

Golden Gate

R/V Sylvia Earle

The book begins on a research vessel in the North Sea that is hijacked. The ship in the book is fictional, but I researched it by studying the ships from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, specifically the R/V Sally Ride.

<https://scripps.ucsd.edu/ships/sally-ride>

Alcatraz

Alcatraz is an important setting in the book. I researched it in person and used this website from the National Park Service as a reference.

<https://www.nps.gov/alca/>

Muir Woods

Another important setting from the book, and one of my favorite places in the world, is Muir Woods, which is home to coastal redwoods. Here's the National Park Service site about it.

<https://www.nps.gov/muwo/>

Forbidden City

Fabergé Eggs

Fabergé Eggs play a key part in the plot of the book. Here is a story about the eggs done by CBS this morning.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qv_QgxIrgTc

Russian Maps

The super-accurate Russian Maps that I wrote about in the books are real. I learned about them from reading articles like this one from National Geographic.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/maps-soviet-union-ussr-military-secret-mapping-spies>

Chess

The plot of the book follows a series of chess matches. Here is an introduction on how to play chess from the *New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/13/crosswords/chess/how-to-play-chess.html>

And another from Chesskid.com.

<https://www.chesskid.com/learn/articles/how-to-play-chess>

Great Wall of China

Here's a National Geographic article about the Great Wall.

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/great-wall-china>

And here's a YouTube video someone shot while riding down the toboggan from the Great Wall that is featured in the book.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ng3L1LF8nek>

For more information, visit CitySpiesBooks.com

CITY SPIES

LINKS & RESOURCES

City of the Dead

This website has an amazing collection of maps and photographs of the temples in the Valley of the Kings. It was essential to helping me write the book.

https://madainproject.com/theban_mapping_project

British Museum BTS

City of the Dead opens with a break-in at the British Museum. This Google Street View tour of the museum lets me walk throughout the museum from the comfort of my own home.

https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview/british-museum/AwEp68JO4NEckQ?sv_lng=-0.1266024509257022&sv_lat=51.51905368906714&sv_h=306&sv_p=O&sv_pid=JeKwUFYAMWXNWPh3IOg3jw&sv_z=1

And here are some fun facts about the museum.

<http://justfunfacts.com/interesting-facts-about-the-british-museum/>

Egyptology

Kara Cooney is an amazing Egyptologist and was kind enough to let me interview her as part of my research for this book. Here's a link to her website.

<http://karacooney.squarespace.com/>

Kryptos

The Kryptos sculpture at CIA headquarters has puzzled codebreakers for decades. There are many great articles and resources about it online. Here's one from Smithsonian magazine.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/third-and-final-clue-released-ci-sculptures-last-puzzling-passage-180974102/>

Grand Egyptian Museum

The Grand Egyptian Museum is the home of all of King Tut's treasures and is featured in *City of the Dead*. Unfortunately, I had to write the book before it opened, so I used the museum's website to tell me about it.

<https://grandegyptianmuseum.org/>