

A Curriculum Guide to

Spy Camp

By Stuart Gibbs

About the Book

Ben Ripley is at it again! Ben plans to spend the summer hanging out with his best friend, Mike, restoring their friendship and reviving his ordinary, uneventful life. But then his plans are derailed, and he has to once again avoid getting caught by the devious organization SPYDER. He also gets the chance to reunite with the beautiful Erica Hale and possibly win her over. Ben survived *Spy School*, despite his lack of experience in being a secret agent, and he even discovered some untapped skills. But will Ben survive *Spy Camp*?

Prereading Activities

The following activities contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standard: (RL.7.2).

1. Have students write a short objective summary of the major events in chronological order from the first novel, *Spy School*. Make sure major characters are identified and examined including the protagonist and antagonist. Allow students to discuss how characters changed throughout the novel.
2. Hold a discussion and have students explain a time they had to work with a group of people they did not like. How did they come together? What did working together teach them? How would the outcome be different if they did not overcome their differences and work together?

Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.7.1, 2, 3, 4, 6).

1. The first novel setting was at *Spy School*. Based on the title of the second book, *Spy Camp*, where will the setting be? What type of scenery might be used? How might the setting influence the drama and/or action in the story?
2. In the beginning of *Spy Camp*, Ben's plans are derailed by the delivery of two letters. What are the two letters? How did they derail his plans?
3. Who is Erica Hale to Ben? Why does Ben go to Erica about the letter SPYDER sent him? What does this say about their relationship?
4. Chip and Hank are brothers. Based on the first novel, *Spy School*, and the second novel, *Spy Camp*, how do the brothers behave in the same way? How are they different?

5. Who is Mike Brezinski? How does the CIA try to convince Mike that the incident that occurred in the first novel at Spy School was minor? Does he believe their story? How do you know?
6. Why does Ben need so much protection at Funland? What happens at Funland that advances the plot? How does this incident propel the action in the novel?
7. Who is Murray Hill? Where is he supposed to be? How could he be in two places at once? Create a prediction on the whereabouts of Murray Hill and use textual evidence to support your claim.
8. Throughout the novel, the CIA convinces Ben's parents to believe he is at a science academy. Would your parents be convinced by the CIA's lies? How would your parents react to the stories the CIA tells Ben's parents?
9. The camp's name is Happy Trails. How is this name ironic for a spy camp? How does this show that the CIA is secretive and sneaky? What are some other examples that show the CIA is a complicated and complex organization?
10. Why does Zoe call Ben "Smokescreen"? How are nicknames given to the characters, and what effect does this have on the characters?
11. What are the code names for Zoe, Warren, and Erica? What do the code names reveal about each character's personality?
12. Why did Alexander Hale take credit for the Murray Hill's capture? What does this say about his character? How does this action go against his reputation as a hero?
13. Compare and contrast the true Alexander Hale with his reputation. How are they alike? How are they different?
14. Examine Erica and Alexander's relationship. How do they treat each other? How does their complex relationship help to develop the theme of the novel?
15. What is meant by the term *double agent*? What words help the reader to figure out what is meant by the term *double agent*? Cite evidence, including page numbers of the words and phrases used, to help support your answer.
16. Which words help the reader to figure out what *debonair* means in the first paragraph of Chapter 10? How do you know? Which words or phrases help you to determine the meaning? Cite evidence from the novel to support your conclusion.
17. In Chapter 10 Alexander Hale says, "SPYDER is too crafty for this to work. They'll probably expect us to double back. So what we should really do is *double double back* and go

downstream.” How does this quote help to set the mood of the novel? Give three other examples of quotes that help to set the mood of the novel.

18. How does the author portray Claire’s accent? How does the author’s word choice and diction affect the characters? Why does the author alter the word choice for each character? How does this affect the readers experience in getting to know the characters?

19. Who helps Erica, Ben, and agent Hale get away from SPYDER at the Apple Valley Reformation camp? What is so special about him? How does his showing up complicate the group’s situation?

20. How does Erica’s turmoil over her father’s actions go against her code name Ice Queen? How do her internal conflicts help to build the anticipation in the story? What critical moments in the story show that Erica Hale is a complex character?

21. When Ben finds out the truth about why SPYDER is using him, how does he feel? How does he show he is not useless as a spy? How does his realization help him to understand Alexander Hale?

22. What is SPYDER’s ultimate goal? What does the organization plan to do? How are they going to achieve their goal?

23. Who is the real Joshua Hallal? How does his character help to shape the action in the plot? What part does his character play in the overall story? How does he relate to the others in the story?

24. Alexander and Ben both discover they are not useless as spies. How do their realizations help to develop the theme of the novel? What is one prevailing theme in the novel? Use characters’ actions, lack of action, dialogue, thoughts, and feelings to determine the theme.

25. What does the letter at the end of the novel suggest? Why would the author choose to end the novel in this way? What impact does the ending have on the story?

Postreading Activities

The following activities contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.7.6, 9).

1. Have students research Sarah Emma Edmonds. Write a short objective summary about Sarah Emma Edmonds’ life and her importance to the Civil War. What were her contributions to the Civil War? Have students analyze Civil War – era espionage and compare it to the espionage in both novels, *Spy School* and *Spy Camp*. Compare and contrast real life secret intelligence efforts to those in both books.

2. Have students come up with their own scenario to escape SPYDER and write a short story about it.

3. How would the story be different if it was from Alexander's or Murray's point of view? Rewrite a short excerpt from the story but change the point of view to reflect Alexander's or Murray's point of view. How would the story or plotline change if it was told by a different narrator?

This guide was written in 2013 by Michelle Carson, Reading Teacher, Reading Endorsed, Palm Beach Central High School, FL.

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