



A Curriculum Guide to:

***Spy School: Spy School British Invasion***  
By Stuart Gibbs

**About the Book**

Superspy middle schooler Ben Ripley will take down SPYDER for good in this latest addition to the *New York Times* bestselling Spy School series. Stranded in Mexico after nearly capturing the SPYDER leaders, thirteen-year-old Ben Ripley desperately needs a shower. But even more so, he and his spy school friends need to come up with a new plan to defeat their enemies, their only clue being a key that opens who knows what. The mission: go rogue from the CIA, join up with the British MI6, locate the leader of SPYDER—the enigmatic Mr. E—and bring down the evil organization once and for all. Only, it won't be easy. They'll have to deal with rival evil splinter factions, devious double-crosses, and driving on the opposite side of the road. But they have no other choice; this is their last and final chance to crack the code on SPYDER.

## Discussion Questions

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *Spy School British Invasion* as reflective writing prompts or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection. This guide is aligned with the following Common Core Standards: (R.L. 4.1-3, 7, 9) (R.L.5.1-4, 7, 9) (R.L. 6.1-3) (S.L.6.1, 2, 3) (W.4-6.4)

1. In a classified document, the Operation Tiger Shark team learned that they might finally be able to take down SPYDER. While all their efforts to end SPYDER have involved dangerous tasks, what is it about this particular mission that implies this could be the most dangerous mission yet? Do you think the team is afraid? How might they handle fear? Explain your answers.
2. Members of Operation Tiger Shark are offered a chance not to accept this mission because the CIA might disavow their statuses as agents-in-training; for those who do choose to move forward, do you think they are making the right decision? Why do you think they choose to participate? Explain your answers. What are possible consequences of accepting this mission? If you were in this position, what would you do?
3. As the novel opens, readers learn that "the key to defeating SPYDER, the MOST dangerous consortium of evildoers on earth, sat in the middle of the dining room table of the penthouse suite." How does it make you feel to learn that an old-fashioned silver key is *the* key to possibly defeating this evil organization? Do you agree that the key is the answer? Does it surprise you? How does Ben and his team feel about it? What is it about this small key that still feels problematic?
4. Ben stated, "Unfortunately, Murray wasn't the slightest bit trustworthy. Despite how upset he was at SPYDER for double-crossing him, he had double-crossed me plenty of times." Consider what you've learned about Murray throughout the *Spy School* novels, and specifically in *Spy School British Invasion*. Why do you think Murray continues to behave the way he does? Do you think there is any real hope for him to change his ways? Has his relationship with Ben remained consistent, or has it evolved? Explain your answers.
5. After standing close to her, Ben realized that Zoe was "much more attractive" than he realized. Can you think of any ways in which this feeling presents a problem for Ben? Would you describe their relationship as complicated? Explain your answers.
6. Murray told Ben and his team, "As I'm sure you know, SPYDER is a tricky organization to work for. There's no honor among thieves, and everyone is always worried someone else is stabbing them in the back. Literally." Besides being willing to

execute evil plots, what makes working for and with such a group so problematic? How important is trust within a group, and how might you know if you can trust someone?

7. Why did learning Joshua and Dane got the better of Cyrus put the team at such unease? Up to this point, what role has Cyrus played for these spies in training? Now that he's out of commission, predict how they will do without his leadership. What qualities make for a good leader?
8. In what ways does Mike's cleverness help Operation Tiger Shark's mission? How does this prove challenging for Ben? Do you believe Ben has a reason to feel this way? Explain your answers.
9. While trying to solve the key's mystery, Zoe told the group, "The number isn't important. At the moment, I mean. But what is important is that it's in Tottenham font." What does this attention to detail indicate about Zoe's potential as a spy-in-training? In what ways does Mike and Zoe's shared passion for typography possibly change their friendship?
10. Ben said, "Until only a few months before, I hadn't even been on an airplane due to the costs." How has Ben's life changed since the CIA recruited him for spy school? Do you believe he's made the right choice by attending the school? Explain your answers.
11. How is learning that Operation Tiger Shark is being hunted by MI6 because of the unfortunate destruction at the British Museum problematic? Do you think the group was wise not to reach out to the CIA or MI6 for assistance for the rest of this mission? Explain your position. What might have happened if they had reached out?
12. What are your first impressions of Orion? Given his occupation and income, what did you find most interesting about his home and hobbies? He stated, "I've always dreamed about having a place like this, ever since I was a kid. But there are some serious problems with it." What were these serious problems? Did you get the sense that Orion was happy in his home? Explain your answers.
13. While describing Erica's legacy as a spy-to-be, Ben stated, "I would have already died several times over had Erica not been my partner on multiple missions." Based on what you've learned in *Spy School British Invasion* and other books in the *Spy School* series, what makes Erica so gifted in this regard?
14. After Erica asked Zoe about her feelings on the parachute jump, Zoe angrily replied, "Oh. Now you want to know how I'm feeling?" Why did Zoe react poorly when she witnessed Ben helping Erica? In what ways does Ben's friendship with Erica

complicate his relationship with Zoe? Why do you think Ben didn't just tell Zoe that Erica temporarily lost some of her vision? Do you believe he made the right decision to keep Erica's secret? Explain your answers.

15. Before leaping out of the helicopter, Erica responded to Alexander by saying, "Thanks, Daddy. See you soon." What makes Erica's comment to her father so unusual? Given what you know from the previous *Spy School* adventures, do Alexander's actions in *Spy School British Invasion* surprise you? If so, in what ways?
16. As the team passed through the Musée d'Orsay, they discovered that hiding in plain sight was actually not particularly challenging. Why is that so? In what ways do they use their age to their advantage?
17. Consider what you've learned about Mr. E, the head of SPYDER, in previous *Spy School* novels. Do the revelations about Mr. E's identity in *Spy School British Invasion* surprise you? If so, in what ways? How do they change your opinion of SPYDER, if at all?
18. Thinking back to events in *Spy School British Invasion* and the *Spy School* series as a whole, name your favorite mission that Ben and his team have undertaken. Why has this mission stuck with you? What did the characters learn from it? How did it impact their relationships, or their fight against SPYDER?

### Extension Activities

1. After discovering that the key opens a storage unit in the vaults of the British Museum, Operation Tiger Shark hastily travels to London to discover if its contents will prove to be the cornerstone to their success. Use the Internet or books in your school library to research the British Museum, discovering the following information:
  - Where is the British Museum?
  - When was it established?
  - How big is the museum, and how many items are in its collection?
  - How many visitors does it have annually?
  - How much does it cost to visit?
  - What are some of the most celebrated treasures in the collection?
  - What makes this collection so vital to civilization?

After completing your research, share your knowledge with your peers. Why do you think Stuart Gibbs chose to set some of his book here? Why would MI6 be so upset about damages to the museum?

2. After learning the mission required the team to go to London, a city Ben has always wanted to visit, he said, "One of the biggest problems with being a spy is that you don't get to do much sightseeing."

Work with a small group to plan a fun excursion for Ben and the team to London, the Cotswolds, or Paris, celebrating their success in defeating SPYDER. Create a travel itinerary that includes the following:

- A flight from your closest international airport.
- A hotel.
- Ground transportation. How will they get from the airport to the hotel? From the hotel to sightseeing?
- Offer a list of the eight not-to-be-missed activities, museums, or sites, with a short explanation as to what makes each one special.
- With all the sightseeing, the team will be sure to be hungry; select three to four restaurants that are not to be missed.

Once your group has finished drafting the details for this tour, create a digital presentation that highlights the key parts of the trip you've planned.

3. After admitting he gained entry into the spy academy because of his father's legacy and work for the CIA, and that cheating was the only way he survived, Alexander stated, "I admit, it was loathsome and despicable—but it was also exceptionally good training for being a spy. In this business, it often doesn't matter how you get the job done, so long as it gets done." Do you agree with his assessment that the end justifies the means? After taking some time to consider your position, draft a letter to the CIA where you make a case for or against Alexander Hale's argument.

4. Readers learn that both Zoe and Mike are avid fans of the study of typography, and their knowledge of Samuel Hewes, inventor of the Tottenham font, and his work proves critical to the mission's ultimate success. Using library resources and the Internet, research the study of typography to learn the following:

- What are the important events in typography history?
- When and where did those happen?
- Are there any recognized leaders of typography?
- Are there any ways in which modern technology impacts typography?
- What are the most popular types of fonts? Are there any that are universally disliked?
- What's your personal favorite font and why?

Be sure to share your discoveries with your classmates. If you could design your own font, what would it look like? What would it be called? Draw a sample to share with the class.

5. Operation Tiger Shark's final mission culminates on the iconic Eiffel Tower and in the personal quarters of Gustave Eiffel. Using the Eiffel Tower's official website (<https://www.toureffel.paris/en>), learn more about Eiffel's tower, his other crowning achievements, and his personal life. Working with classmates or independently, create a screencast narration that provides an overview of what you learned and found most interesting.

*This series guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an assistant professor in Library Science Department in the College of Education at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Brock holds a Ph.D. in Library Science, specializing in children's and young adult literature. Materials for Spy School and Spy Camp (Books 1 and 2) were written by Michelle Carson, Reading Teacher, Reading Endorsed, Palm Beach Central High School, FL.*

*This guide has been provided by Simon & Schuster for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.*