



Unlocking Secrets for Your Students at the International Spy Museum: Mind Your Own Business!

Activity Applicable to: English/Language Arts

Purpose: Today's students understand that various forms of communication result in lasting digital fingerprints that become part of their permanent record and identity. Consequently, understanding how codes and ciphers can be used to convey messages discretely is an opportunity to challenge students to rethink communication and to be particularly intentional in maintaining their privacy.

Selected Common Core Standards (other standards may apply in your state or district):

RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text, and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

RI.8.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

RH.8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

WHST.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1: Bell Ringer Immediately launch into one of the following opening activities that will prepare your students for the lesson and direct them towards personal connections with the topic of codes and privacy.

Bell Ringer Option A – Journal: For three minutes, write without stopping about how important your privacy is to you. Give examples of information that most people wish to keep out of public knowledge and explain why.

Bell Ringer Option B – Code Breaker: Distribute the coded message handout (included) and challenge your students to work backwards to explain how the secret message was transmitted.

STEP 2: Explore Terms In pairs and trios, ask students to use their own words to develop definitions for the terms below. If a term is completely unfamiliar to the students, offer the related sentence and invite students to determine the word's meaning based on contextual clues. Invite students to post their definitions in the room and allow them to add or modify the definitions as they continue their work and deepen their understanding.

Cipher – *Unable to understand the mysterious letter, she looked for a **cipher** to figure out how to convert what she was seeing into something she could read.*

Code – *We gave him the secret **code** so that he would be able to communicate with us secretly even when we were with other people.*

Privacy – *The chef did not want outsiders to know the recipe so she ushered everyone out of the kitchen to have **privacy** while she cooked.*



STEP 3: Evaluate Advantages and Disadvantages

- A. Invite students to **THINK** about the following table and add notes about the privacy advantages and disadvantages of using different ways to present particular topics or ideas. Remind them to consider factors like permanent records, personal and professional reputations, and accessibility.

FORMAT FOR PRESENTING TOPICS OR IDEAS	Individual Notes: Privacy Advantages	Individual Notes: Privacy Disadvantages	Shared Notes: Privacy Advantages	Shared Notes: Privacy Disadvantages
1. Print (letters, newspapers, posters)				
2. Digital text (Emails, text messages, e-newsletters, Facebook)				
3. Video (Movies, clips, video blogs)				
4. Snapchat and other apps that seem to disappear				
5. Multimedia				

B. **PAIR** students (or group in threes, if you must!) so that they can benefit from checking their own ideas and hearing the ideas of a classmate or two.

C. Invite students to **SHARE** notes with one another and add to the final two columns of the table. Have students conclude their discussion by identifying a format from the grid that was particularly interesting to them during their discussion.



STEP 4: Analyze the Purpose Direct students to select one current sample of the communication format they identified in the previous activity. The sample should be at least 100 words so that students have sufficient material to work with. Using their selection, students analyze the presented information and evaluate the motive or purpose of the communication. In either a written, spoken or recorded format, students should address the following questions:

- What visual elements are included?
- Is there quantifiable data?
- Is/How is oral communication incorporated?
- Are there social implications?
- Is there a commercial or marketing appeal?
- Is there a political message?
- Who is the intended audience and how are the characteristics of that particular audience factored into the way the communication has been prepared?
- What specific aspects of the text reveal the author's point of view or purpose?

STEP 5: Disguise the Purpose Using a Code or a Cipher Produce clear and coherent writing with logically developed progression, intentional organization, and professional style that secretly contains a private message to a select audience.

1. Use the selected communication format from the previous activity and create an original communication.
2. Begin by identifying the secret message you wish to convey and the audience for whom the message is intended.
3. Determine whether you will use a code or a cipher.
4. Design the general idea of the public message that will disguise your secret message.
5. Revise and refine your work until you have a well-polished public communication that disguises your secret message.
6. Share the code or cipher accordingly.

STEP 6: Reflect and Take Action The International Spy Museum reminds us that “all is not what it seems” and cautions against taking anything for granted. To allow students to reflect and prepare themselves to take action, use some or all of the following questions to lead a group discussion or to structure a journaling session:

- Where might you ever have been exposed to hidden messages?
- When is it a good idea to keep information private?
- How can you use what you have learned about communication to make better choices that will preserve your reputation and maintain your privacy?
- How can you use what you have learned in order to identify situations in which others may be attempting to get secret communication past you?



ADDITIONAL LESSON CONSIDERATIONS

Differentiation: Your students' experiences, learning preferences, strengths, and interests should influence the instruction you offer. Consider the following variations that may increase the effectiveness of this lesson for your particular students:

- Specify advertising as the source of messages.
- Encourage students to construct ciphers with paper and cardboard tubes or boxes.
- Team up with your science teacher to use lemon juice as heat-activated ink.

Recommendation for Assessment: When evaluating your students' work, use a rubric that includes the elements of the aligned standards. Always share your grading rubric as part of the assignment so that students may take ownership of their own progress towards their learning objectives.

Extension Options:

- Direct students to ask questions about background checks.
- Invite an IT specialist to lead a workshop about the permanence of web uploads.
- Dissect the concepts of a “secret” versus a “surprise.”



Bell Ringer Option 2- Code Breaker

Psst! An informant reported that the following coded message actually contains the message, “HELP ME I AM BEING HELD HERE SEND HELP”

Unfortunately, the informant disappeared before being able to explain the code.

Your job, should you choose to accept it, is to analyze the following coded message and determine exactly how the secret message was relayed through it.

Coded Message

Hello! Everything here is going fine. Lots of things to do! Please remember to feed my fish. Maybe you can send a picture, too? Everyone here has been nice. I wish you could meet them. Anyway, something funny happened the other day. My foot got caught on a log and I tripped. But the funniest part was when a bird pooped on my head while I was sprawled out on the ground! Everyone laughed at that. I couldn't believe it myself. No one warned me there was a big log in front of me. Gotta make sure to look out from now on!

How has everything been for you? Everything okay? Little by little, I am learning how to camp. Doing everything for myself has been fun, even if it's kind of new. Have you started school yet? Enjoying your classes? Remember to show up on time and to pay attention! Everyone always gives that advice!

So, I guess that's it for now. Everyone is getting ready to go out and have some more fun now. No need to send any more clothes. Doing laundry on my own has been fun. Hope everything is going well for you! Every day I miss you. Lots of love. Please say hi to everyone!

Modified from <http://www.wikihow.com/Sample/Acrostic-Code-Paragraph>