



What is a secret code?

Book band: White

This book explores codes of many kinds – both written and visual. It particularly looks at how codes were used during wartime.

Skills focus

- 1a Draw on knowledge of vocabulary to understand texts
- 1b Identify / explain key aspects of fiction and non-fiction texts, such as characters, events, titles and information
- 1d Make inferences from texts
- Monitor understanding

Guided reading session

You will need

- Multiple copies of Collins Big Cat *What is a secret code?*
- Reading Journals

Tune in

Ask children to look at the front cover of the book and to read the title.

Ask the following questions:

- What do you think a secret code is?
- What kind of book do you think this is? (*non-fiction*)

Ask them to read the back cover blurb.

Ask the following questions:

- What kind of information do you think you'll find in this book?
- What kind of features do you think it will have? (*contents, glossary, index, captions*)

Ask children to find the contents page.

Explore their understanding of what a contents page is for and how to use it.

Ask them to turn to the section called 'What are secret codes?'.

Discuss the question on page 2.

Read page 3.

Ask: Why do you think the word 'key' is in bold? (*It's in the glossary.*)

Read the sentence containing the word 'key'.

Ask: What do you think it means?

Ask children to use the contents to find the glossary.

Explore their understanding of what a glossary is for and how to use it.

Ask them to look up the meaning of 'key'.

Focus on the index.

Explore their understanding of what an index is for and how to use it.

Ask children to turn to pages 4 and 5.

Ask them to point to the heading and captions on these pages.

Heads together

Ask children to read pages 4 to 7 and to note down, in their Reading Journals, three interesting facts that they learn.

As they read, move around the group asking individual children to 'turn up the volume' so that you can hear them.

Monitor their understanding of what they are reading by listening to tone and expression used when reading.

Wrap up

Ask children to read out their interesting facts and to explain why they chose them.

Ask the following questions:

- So, why do people use secret codes? (*to keep secret information hidden*)
- Are codes always written down? (*no*)

Vocabulary boost session

You will need

- Multiple copies of Collins Big Cat *What is a secret code?*
- Reading Journals
- Flipchart or whiteboard
- A4 whiteboards and pens

Vocabulary table

Focus word	Child-friendly explanation	Example sentence	Tell me...
invented	If you invented something, you were the first person to think of it or make it.	I wish I had invented a time travel machine.	Tell me what you wish you had invented.
swapped	If you swapped something, you changed it for something else.	I swapped stickers with my friend.	Tell me about something you have swapped.
positioned	If you position something, you carefully put it in a certain place.	I positioned my fish finger on top of my chips.	Tell me about something you could position.

Tune in

Ask children to remind you what the book is about.

Ask the following questions:

- What have you learnt so far?
- Have you ever used a secret code?

Read pages 8 to 11, explaining the meaning of the focus words as you read them. You may wish to use the information in the Vocabulary table above to help you.

Challenge children to write their names in Morse code in their Reading Journals.

On the flipchart or whiteboard, write up the focus words and example sentences.

Ask children to read these aloud and give them the meanings of the words again.

Heads together

Use the 'Tell me' prompts to develop children's understanding of the focus words.

As they respond, ask questions to help them build on their understanding.

Ask: Can you identify the word class that the focus words belong to? (*They are all verbs.*)

Wrap up

Challenge children to create their own sentences that contain the focus words. They can write these on their whiteboards and hold them up so that you can check them.

Ask children to choose one of the words as their word of the week. Challenge them to use it as much as they can – both at home and at school.

Follow-up independent sessions

You will need

- Multiple copies of Collins Big Cat *What is a secret code?*
- Multiple copies of Resource sheet: Quiz

Children can read pages 12 to 17.

They can then answer questions 1 to 3 on Resource sheet: Quiz.

Children can read pages 18 to 21.

They can then answer questions 4 to 6 on Resource sheet: Quiz.

Children can read pages 22 to 27.

They can then answer questions 7 to 9 on Resource sheet: Quiz.

Resource sheet



Name: _____

Quiz

1. Which language did the US army use in 1918?

2. What were a group of soldiers called in the Choctaw language?

3. What animals were used to carry messages?

4. Who invented the Enigma machine?

5. When did Germany use the Enigma machine?

6. What is a cryptologist?

7. When did Bletchley Park open?

8. What subjects do codebreakers need a university degree in?

9. Who wrote three coded messages more than 200 years ago?

Quiz answers

1. Choctaw
2. a tribe
3. pigeons and dogs
4. Arthur Scherbius
5. during the Second World War
6. a codebreaker
7. 1939
8. maths or computer science
9. Thomas Beale