



# SECRET BREAKERS

THE POWER OF THREE

H. L. DENNIS

## READING GUIDE

Use *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* in the classroom to help you fulfil the new curriculum for Key Stage Two.



# Introduction

This Reading Guide has been designed to support the use of *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* by H.L. Dennis in Key Stage 2 English lessons and clearly refers to the new curriculum. It is likely that this guide will be most useful for Guided Reading or Literature Circle work or, if *Secret Breakers* is being used as a mentor text in the classroom, as a basis for whole class reading support. It has been designed in order to extend children's enjoyment of the story, and give you the chance to make the most of teaching and assessment possibilities while working with the text. There are enough session plans to provide three weeks of English lesson focus if studied as a whole class, or two terms of work if *Secret Breakers* is studied as a Guided Reading text. If *Secret Breakers* is being used as a class mentor text, some class reading time out of the English sessions to ensure coverage may be necessary. If used for Group Reading it is suggested that children are set the task of reading each chapter independently (as home learning or in independent reading time) and that the fifteen sessions are held to deepen understanding of sections read.

The author's website [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) provides a range of interactive possibilities, including the chance to find out more about the history, characters and locations used to inspire the story. There is also the chance for you and your pupils to sign up for *Secret Breakers* updates.

## Background information on author and *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three*.



### About the book:

*Secret Breakers* is a modern adventure series which sees three young teenagers join a secret code cracking department based at Bletchley Park Mansion. Their mission is to decipher the most mysterious manuscript in the world: The Voynich Manuscript. The manuscript really exists, as do the other un-cracked codes that run throughout the series. *The Power of Three* is the first book in the series and introduces readers to the concept of real codes, real mysteries and real dangers. As a genuinely modern story it taps into myths and legends from the past! Readers work alongside the book's heroes to try and unlock the truth of the real unbroken codes. *The Da Vinci Code* for kids ...

### About the author:

H.L. Dennis has worked in a boarding school for deaf children; in a book shop and as a children's story teller in a Native American Tepee. She and her husband taught together at the largest Junior School in Europe where she, until recently, worked part time as a Year Five teacher and Head of English. Helen is now a full-time writer who enjoys making visits to schools where she gives talks and runs workshops. For details see [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com)





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## **Part One: Activities based on National Curriculum 2014 ..... 5**

Reading for pleasure has a big emphasis in the new National Curriculum 2014. In this section you will find suggestions of activities which can be completed whilst reading *Secret Breakers* and which make direct reference to relevant parts of the new curriculum. These activities can also be used to supplement tasks suggested in later sections of the guide or used independently.

## **Part Two: Checklist of Key Stage Two coverage ..... 8**

To help you ensure coverage of statutory requirements of the National Curriculum 2014, we have provided a checklist for Key Stage 2. The lesson by lesson breakdown in Section B, ensures that these elements are covered. For convenience, this checklist is provided to ensure you cover all elements required and you can easily make adjustments to listed lessons if there are time restraints, whilst still ensuring key skills are covered.

## **Part Three: Lesson breakdowns ..... 10**

Here you will find lesson by lesson breakdowns. It is possible to cross reference the aims of these lessons with the National Curriculum Checklist page. The structure of the lessons also allows for connections to be made to APPs, Strands and Levels used in the previous curriculum. The lesson plan format is as follows:

### Chapter/Lesson Synopsis

A brief summary of the covered chapter and the intentions of the session.

### Learning Objective

Direct reference to Learning Objectives as based on the Primary Framework Strands. (To allow for differentiation, the LIs across Years 4, 5 and 6 are referenced.) These LIs are listed as levelled objectives as it is recognised that many schools still use APPs as a basis for monitoring reading progress.

### Spotlight On Text

Each session takes an extract of text to 'spotlight'. These extracts can be displayed to the children on an interactive white board or photocopied for children to refer to and annotate. (Each extract is provided on its own page at the back of the guide.) This is the part of the lesson to focus on structure and style and developing key vocabulary with reference to widening children's knowledge of their own reading skills.

### Reading Skill Emphasis

Each session is designed with an emphasis on a particular reading skill. DEDUCTION, INFERENCE or LITERAL reading skills are targeted. Questions and input are designed to focus application of skill in each of these core areas.



# continued...

## Reflect

This is the part of the session where children discuss and reflect on what they have read and make PREDICTIONS about future possibilities in the story.

## Plot Points

Although studying the extracts in detail is useful it is important to end each session with a discussion about the flow of the story and major plot points covered to get a sense of the complete story arc of the novel.

## Assessment Focus

Each session makes reference to assessment opportunities allowing teachers to record progress on individual APP grids. (These are referenced across levels 3-5.)

## Follow Up

*Secret Breakers* is a book that covers many aspects of the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 curriculum. At the end of each session there are suggestions about possible activities which can be used to extend learning and enjoyment either in the classroom or as home learning activities.

## **Part Four: The rest of the series ..... 40**

The final section makes reference to the other five books in the *Secret Breakers* series and how children can be steered towards them to develop their own reading for pleasure.

**(NB: in places 'expected' answers are given in note form in brackets to aid teacher planning. These answers, and in fact the questions, are not intended to be exhaustive.)**



# Part One:

## Activities based on National Curriculum 2014

Key quotes from the National Curriculum 2014 have been highlighted in this section for easy reference.

“ **Increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including ... myths and legends**”  
English: The National Curriculum in England, 2014

*Secret Breakers* is a modern adventure series. It does however draw inspiration from myths and legends and includes lots of real historical information woven into the plot.

The following activities could be carried out to fulfil the directive from the National Curriculum 2014 included above.

- Look at the epigraph of *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three*. Get children to look up the term **epigraph** (a phrase or poem that is set at the beginning of a book). Use this time to discuss epigraphs and why some books have them. (add an extra dimension to the story; allow for links to other writings; give clues about the plot)
- What do children know about King Arthur? How much of their information comes from books and films? Ask children to research King Arthur and put together a PowerPoint presentation to share with the class. Ask children to keep a note of all the places they find information e.g.: books; webpages; YouTube etc. How accurate are these sources? Can we know the real story of King Arthur? (Not really! Very little actual historical evidence!)
- Get children to explore the difference between the terms *myth* and *legend*. Make use of dictionaries to define terms. (*Myth = traditional story often making reference to origins/beginnings or something sacred. Legend = an old story that is understood by the teller and the listener to have been likely to have happened.*) How do the stories of Arthur compare to other legends they have studied in other years? Pose the question; Why would the author choose this epigraph? (*The story of King Arthur and Avalon is important in this book but is also pivotal to the whole series!*)
- If children enjoy *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* encourage them to read the other stories in the series. Book Three in particular (*The Knights of Neustria*) looks at the writings of Shakespeare! Ask children to consider the idea of intertextuality. (i.e.: *reference to one story made inside another.*) Can they share with their class ideas about stories that include or make reference to other stories?
- Ask the children to do some research about Bletchley Park Mansion and the work there in war time. What books do they need to look in? What webpages and sites help them in their research? Can they make use of a range of historical books to find details and then use these to develop an increased awareness of the setting used in *Secret Breakers*?

“Pupils should be taught to ... plan their writing by a) discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar, b) discussing and recording ideas.” English: The National Curriculum in England, 2014

“Pupils should be taught to ... draft and write ... in narratives, creating settings, characters and plot.” English: The National Curriculum in England, 2014

Use *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* to generate a range of writing activities using the book as a reference. Ensure children discuss their work with a drafting partner.

For example:

- Look at the description of Bletchley Park Mansion in the book and get children to write their own description. The description in the story is written from Brodie’s Point of View so she sees the statues at the door like characters from a story. Would Hunter see the building differently? (*probably be more concerned with number of windows etc.*)
- Look at the map of Bletchley included in the book and ask children to write a description of the whole estate using the map to guide them. Can they transfer this skill to using a map of their own school to write a description? Is it easier to describe a place they know and have seen? Look at video clips on YouTube of Bletchley. Get children to re-write the description and see if it is improved after adding visual images as a reference.
- Ask children to write an advert for a secret breaker. Look at newspaper job adverts and use what is known from *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* to ensure the advert would attract the right applicants.
- Ask children to add their own secret breaker to the adventure. Take a scene from the book and get them to add a character that they have invented. Are the skills of the secret breaker obvious to the reader?

“Effective composition involves forming, articulating and communicating ideas, and then organising them coherently for a reader. This requires clarity, awareness of the audience, purpose and context, and an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.” English: The National Curriculum in England, 2014

“Pupils should be taught to ... understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by ... identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning.” English: The National Curriculum in England, 2014

Consider the objective above and make direct reference to the structure of *Secret Breakers* through activities enabling you to identify how the book has been put together to convey meaning.

For example:

- Think about the blurb of the book and how it makes a direct appeal to the reader. Get children to compare this to other book blurbs. Is this effective? Do they want or need more information? Can they write their own book blurb for *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* and select information that tempts people to read but does not give away too much of the plot?
- Look at the FACT page at the very beginning of *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three*. How important is this information? Why did the author include it? What happens if you don’t read this page?

- Consider the tagline of the book – unlock the truth. Why was this chosen? Does it give an idea of what the books are about? Why do taglines have to be short and snappy? Can the children write their own tagline for *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three*?
- Think about how *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* is organised. Get children to think about the chapters and their titles. How does the title prepare the reader for what is going to happen in the chapter?
- How do the chapters end? Get the children to think about the use of cliffhangers in ending each chapter and how this is used as a device to get readers to keep turning the page.
- Consider how jumps in time or location or character Point of View are shown in the text. Is this effective? What other ways are there of showing a change in location, time or POV in narrative?
- Consider the whole plot of *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three*. Does it fit the structure of a story mountain? (*beginning; crisis; return; resolution*) Can children plot episodes from the story on a mountain structure and see how the narrative builds?

**Using all these discussion points, can children structure and draft their own story. Can they write a new *Secret Breakers* adventure!**

“Pupils should be taught to create sketch books to record their observations and use them to review and revisit ideas.” Art and Design: The National Curriculum in England, 2014

*Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* makes use of a logbook/sketchbook pages to help communicate code information and details important to the plot. Consider this with the children.

For example:

- Examine the logbook pages included with the narrative. How do they help aid understanding of the codes or key details?
- Why do they include crossings out? (*because it is okay to make errors while recording notes*)
- Think about who made these log pages? (*Brodie*)
- Consider how Brodie uses her observations to work out answers and how important the images are for the audience to understand her notes.
- Why are there other notes written on these pages in a different handwriting? (*Hunter makes notes too...or uses the pages to communicate with Brodie*)
- How would the pages be different if Tusia had made them? (*more shape and space references*)
- Ask the children to add their own log book pages to explain a section of the text.
- How important are the visual clues to the reader when dealing with codes?



# Part Two:

## Checklist of key stage two coverage

The emphasis of the new English curriculum is on moving children onto the next stage of learning by increasing their enjoyment of books and developing their chance to read for pleasure. Whilst reading *Secret Breakers: The Power of Three* and using the structured lesson breakdowns which follow in this guide, it is suggested that teachers use the following checklist as an aid to ensuring coverage of the National Curriculum 2014. The sections that follow have been written to ensure all elements listed are completed but if time restraints are an issue, this list could act as a checklist for teachers slimming down lesson content to ensure children reach their learning milestones.

The criteria listed first, is more general in scope and should permeate all discussions about the story. It should be slotted into time according to the teacher's judgement of need. The second list of criteria is accompanied by reference to specific lessons in the guide. These connections are exemplary and not in any way exhaustive.

### **Pupils should be taught to:**

#### **IN GENERAL:**

- develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read
- read books that are structured in different ways and read for a range of purposes
- ask questions to improve their understanding of a text
- identify main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarise these
- explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary
- provide reasoned justifications for their views.
- distinguish between statements of fact and opinion

#### **SPECIFICALLY:**

- using dictionaries to check the meaning of words that they have read (*see use of dictionary activity involving 'epigraph' in Part One NC 2014 listing*)
- increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and retelling some of these orally (*see discussion work on King Arthur in Part One NC 2014 listing*)
- identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of books (*see theme of Teamwork element in Session Six*)
- discussing words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination (*see use of similes work in Session Nine*)
- understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by: checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and explaining the meaning of words in context (*see analysis of the use of Fire terms in Session Thirteen*)



- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence (*see focus of Session Eleven*)
- predicting what might happen from details stated and implied (*see focus of Session Eleven*)
- identify how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning (*see work on metaphor in Session Three*)
- participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say (*see discussion on character in Session Three*)



# Part Three:

## Lesson breakdowns

### SESSION ONE: The unbroken secret behind the story

#### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

This session will involve introducing the book to the children and allowing them to spend time looking at the cover design and blurb as well as the information provided about the book and the author. Time should be given to allow children to consider the 'Unbroken Secrets behind the story' page which is at the very start of the novel. This page gives factual background to the ideas which inspired the story and therefore ground the novel securely in the real world.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

##### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts.

Year 4: Use knowledge of different organisational features of texts to find information effectively.

Year 5: Compare different types of narrative and information texts and identify how they are structured.

Year 6: Understand how writers use different structures to create coherence and impact.

#### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT: EXTRACT ONE

Chosen to deepen understanding of decisions authors make when organising text.

#### READING SKILL EMPHASIS: LITERAL

- How does the presentation of this information help you understand that this section of the book is true? (*separate page; bold heading*)
- What word is included to help you understand this section is not made up? (*fact*)
- What is a manuscript? (*book or document written by hand and not printed*)
- What is an academic? (*someone involved in higher education or research*)
- Does the author add descriptive writing e.g.: figurative language, to the piece? If not, why not? (*no – not appropriate for factual page*)
- Why does the author repeat the short snappy sentence 'they failed?' (*emphasise the failure*)
- What impact does this have on the reader? (*set up expectation that the task is very difficult*)

#### REFLECT:

- How does this first page of spotlighted text contrast with the blurb of the book? (*the blurb is directed at the reader in person – fact page does not try to include the reader in the same way*)
- What is the intention behind the writing of a 'blurb'? What result does the writer want to achieve when they are putting together a blurb? (*tempt reader to read story/give flavour of the type of book*)
- What writing techniques are used in this blurb? (*question to draw in reader; dramatic vocabulary etc.*)

- Why did the author choose to present the opening page of the book like she did? (*make an impact/make it clear the story was based on reality*)
- Have you heard of any of the places or people mentioned on this opening page?
- Think about the cover, particularly the image on the back of the book. Now you have read the 'Unbroken Secret' page, what do you think this is an image of? (*page from MS 408*)
- Can you work out what a Secret Breaker is yet?
- Do you think you would like to be one?

#### **PLOT POINTS:**

- The children will now be clear the story is based on real events and happenings. Throughout the text the characters in the story keep logbooks of their notes and discoveries. Now might be a good time to give the children a small notebook to record their thoughts and ideas in as they read. It will also allow them to keep track of the puzzles and codes that are encountered and practise 'secret breaking' alongside the book characters.
- Ask children to write a description of Robbie Friedman. Don't point it out...but check if anyone has noticed he wears a tiny key around his neck.

#### **ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

##### **AF4 – identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level**

Level 3: a few basic features of organisation at text level identified, with little or no linked comment

Level 4: some structural choices identified with simple comment.

Level 5: comments on structural choices show some general awareness of author's craft. Various features relating to organisation at text level, including form, are clearly identified, with some explanation.

#### **FOLLOW UP:**

- Make use of [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) to find out about the history of MS 408 on the 'Secrets to Break' page of the site.
- Have a go at drawing your own page of MS 408.
- Can you attempt to copy some of the Voynich lettering?
- Explore the 'All about me' section of the site to find out more about H.L Dennis.

## SESSION TWO: Following the Call of the Code

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

This lesson will focus on Chapter One of the book. Time should be given to explore the story set up and the shifting points of view in this chapter. Ensure children understand that parts of the chapter are seen through Brodie's point of view and some through Smithies'.

In this opening chapter, Brodie receives a coded invitation and a map with the words 'light is knowledge' written on it. We see Smithies and Friedman discussing the banned document MS 408. We are introduced to Tandi Tandari and Oscar 'Sicknote' Ingham.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts.

Year 4: Deduce characters' reasons for behaviour from their actions.

Year 5: Infer writers' perspectives from what is written and from what is implied.

Year Six: Understand underlying themes, causes and points of view.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow focus on characterisation.

Before looking at chosen extract, compare opening section of story seen from Brodie's point of view with later sections seen from Smithies'. Discuss why author chose to make beginning so short and snappy. (*draw in reader, build tension, tempt them to read on*) Consider why Smithies' section allows time for more description. (*because Smithies is in control whereas Brodie's life is about to be changed by an unexpected outside event*)

Consider highlighted extract chosen from the end of the chapter. EXTRACT TWO

### READING SKILL EMPHASIS: INFERENCE

- Why do you think Ingham has turned up in his pyjamas?
- What does Ingham do and say in this scene that suggests to you he might be unwell? (*tablets, saying he is never without pain*)
- What other clue is there about his health from what other people say? (*nickname*)
- What does Smithies mean when he says 'Oh well, Oscar "Sicknote" Ingham will certainly make up for that then.'? (*he will talk a lot*)
- Why does Smithies count to ten in his head? (*he is annoyed and wants to keep his temper*)

### REFLECT:

- Why doesn't the author tell us what is in the envelope at the end of the chapter? (*cliff-hanger ending*)
- Why do the sentences become quite short in the final paragraph? (*add to tension*)
- How important do you think the mark of the firebird will be to the story?
- What evidence have you for that apart from the emphasis given in the final paragraph? (*firebird on front cover*)

## **PLOT POINTS**

- Who sent the invitation to Brodie? (*Smithies*)
- How do you know? (*because he tells Friedman he has sent out the invitations*)
- Why are the words 'light is knowledge' written on the map? (*because the light through the holes in the invitation helped Brodie break the code*)
- Is this the only reason that sentence is written here? (*return to the question after completing the read of Chapter Two*)

## **ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

### **AF3 – deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts**

Level 3: straightforward inference based on a single point of reference in the text; responses to text show meaning established at a literal level or based on personal speculation.

Level 4: comments make inferences based on evidence from different points in the text, e.g. interpreting a character's motive from their actions at different points; inferences often correct, but comments are not always rooted securely in the text or repeat narrative or content.

Level 5: comments develop explanation of inferred meanings drawing on evidence across the text. Comments make inferences and deductions based on textual evidence, e.g. in drawing conclusions about a character's feelings on the basis of their speech and actions.

## **FOLLOW UP:**

Can you write a coded message like Brodie receives? If you cannot use pinpricks to mark out letters, place dots underneath letters you need put in your coded message. How easy is this code to use?

## **BONUS EXTRA:**

Look at the photograph of the envelope Smithies shows to Ingham. (*provided with 'extracts' to allow for display on large screen*)

- What sort of message would such an envelope contain?
- How do the children feel when they see the broken phoenix stamp?

## SESSION THREE: Search for the light

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

The chapter sees Brodie discovering that she has been invited to join a secret organisation based at Bletchley Park Mansion (code named Station X.) We see her reluctance to leave her Granddad. He explains that the Black Chamber group which has called her (Team Veritas) was an important part of his life and her own mother's. We are also introduced to Kerrith Vernan who is a worker in the Black Chamber.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts.

Year 4: Explain how writers use figurative and expressive language to create images and atmosphere.

Year 5: Explore how writers use language for comic and dramatic effects.

Year 6: Recognise rhetorical devices used to argue, persuade, mislead and sway the reader.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow discussion about characterisation.

Read section from the opening of the chapter and think about how the writer 'sheds light' on the character of Brodie and her granddad.

### EXTRACT THREE

### READING SKILL: DEDUCTION

- What do you know about Brodie's granddad from this opening? (*that he is a bit unusual because he rides a scooter and has just given up riding roller blades*)
- Why is this unusual? (*not what we expect an older person to do*)
- What effect does using this description have? (*it's funny so it could make the reader laugh*)
- What does this tell us about his character? (*he's a bit of an adventurer and a risk taker*)
- What two comments in the text show us that Brodie is quite concerned with time? (*she says her granddad is late and she is wearing two watches*)
- Why did the writer explain how Brodie kicked the stones into the water? (*to add to the atmosphere; to show us Brodie was bored with waiting*)
- Why does Brodie think 'too small to make a difference'? Is she just thinking about the stone in the water? (*no...it is a metaphor for how she as a child think she is often too small to make a difference*)
- Why does Brodie kick three stones into the water? (*because the rule of three is a good one to use in writing; because the title of the book is 'the Power of Three' and this scene is setting up the idea that when Brodie works alone she is too small to change things but with help she will make a difference*)
- Can you find a simile in the text? (*the water is thick and black like oil*)
- What evidence do you have about Brodie's appearance from this piece? (*she has wild straw coloured hair which never hangs smooth and crooked teeth*)

## REFLECT:

- What other meaning does the phrase 'light is knowledge' have in this chapter? (*Brodie find the document in the lamp on the bridge*)
- Why do you think there was an X on the map? (*x marks treasure; x is where the street lamp is; x is the code name for Bletchley*)
- Why do you think the author chose the title 'Search for Light' for this chapter? (*because of all the clues about light she gave us in the text*)

## PLOT POINTS:

- Do you think Brodie should go to Station X?
- How do we know her granddad is worried about her going? (he is awake in the night and his heart is pressing hard against his ribs)
- List three character traits of Kerrith Vernan from the text. (vain; likes new way of working on codes; ambitious)

## ASSESSMENT FOCUS:

### **AF2 – understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text**

Level 3: simple, most obvious points identified though there may also be some misunderstanding.

Level 4: some relevant points identified comments supported by some generally relevant textual reference or quotation.

Level 5: most relevant points clearly identified, including those selected from different places in the text. Comments generally supported by relevant textual reference or quotation, even when points made are not always accurate.

## FOLLOW UP:

Try and write a description of a character to include personality traits as well as physical qualities. Use extract for model. What unusual behaviour could a character have to demonstrate their state of mind e.g.: bravery; recklessness etc.?

## SESSION FOUR: The chosen ones

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

This chapter sees Brodie leaving home and setting off for Station X. She is given a locket to take by her granddad which is a reminder to her of her home and her mother. She arrives at Station X and meets Hunter and Tusia. They complete the timed tasks to get inside the mansion. We see them working together and each demonstrating his/her own skill. It is the 'power of three' that enables them to succeed in the task. But the adults are disappointed that some have obviously rejected the call to come and be part of Team Veritas.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 8: Engaging and responding to texts.

Year 4: Interrogate texts to deepen and clarify understanding and response.

Year 5: Compare the usefulness of techniques such as visualisation, prediction and empathy in exploring the meaning of texts.

Year 6: Sustain engagement with longer texts, using different techniques to make the text come alive.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow development of empathy and prediction.

### EXTRACT FOUR

### READING SKILL: DEDUCTION

- Why does Brodie shelter her eyes against the glare of the sun? (*because this action emphasises the connection between 'light' and 'knowledge'*)
- The three friends demonstrate their own 'special problem solving skills' in this extract. What are they and what is the evidence for that? (*Brodie...story...story about griffin/ Hunter...maths....remembers number of days late his birthday card is/ Tusia...shape and space...she talks about the holes spaced in the card*)
- Were you able to predict that the key was in the lamp from earlier writing in the chapter or whole story? (*something glinted there/ the answer in the chapter before was in a lamp post/ light is knowledge*)
- Did you predict that Tusia would climb the ladder? (*she has climbed on the roof before*)
- Why does the author keep telling us what time it says on the stopwatch? (*to add to the tension*)

### BONUS EXTRA:

- Use this extract as a prompt for drama or a 'Thought Corridor' where children talk about how they would feel as the time is counting down. (*demonstrate empathy*)
- Use the extract to look at correct layout of speech. Point out grammar points like speech marks, placement of exclamation marks, question marks, new speaker new line rule etc. Use the extract as a model for writing own small section of speech.



### REFLECT:

- Do you think the three children will be friends? Talk about the different personalities demonstrated in the chapter and begin a spider web to show characters strengths and habits of each child.
- Discuss the scene at the end of the chapter when the adults are discussing how many children have come.
- What line in particular makes you nervous? (*explain everything and they could lose them all*)

### PLOT POINTS:

- How important is Brodie's locket? Can you write a description of it? (*silver/ large multicoloured stone/ thick twisted chain/ picture of MS 408 castle inside/ was with Brodie's mother's things when she dies in Belgium*)
- Why do you think there were clues and puzzles set to get inside the Mansion? (*because the children have to demonstrate they are up to the challenge ahead*)

### ASSESSMENT FOCUS:

#### **AF4 – identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level**

Level 3: a few basic features of organisation at text level identified.

Level 4: some structural choices identified with simple comment.

Level 5: comments on structural choices show some general awareness of author's craft. various features relating to organisation at text level, including form, are clearly identified, with some explanation, e.g.: she keeps referring to the time on the stopwatch to add to the tension.

### FOLLOW UP:

Hide some things in the classroom and write clues about their location. Ask others to find the objects in a set time. Think about using story, maths and shape and space clues.

## SESSION FIVE: Drawings in the Ice

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

This chapter sees the workings of Station X explained to the children. They also solve a 'belt code' in order to find the facsimile of MS 408. Smithies meets with Friedman in Bletchley Station cafe to discuss the project and Kerrith Vernan becomes particularly suspicious of Smithies motives for moving to Bletchley Park.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts

Year 4: Explain how writers use figurative and expressive language to create images and atmosphere.

Year 5: Explore how writers use language for dramatic effects.

Year 6: Recognise rhetorical devices used to argue, persuade, mislead and sway the reader.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to look at descriptive language

#### EXTRACT FIVE

### READING SKILL: INFERENCE

- How does the author use other senses to add to the description of the manuscript in the trunk? (*smell and touch as well as sight*)
- Why is the trunk locked? (*because this fits with the idea of 'unlock the truth' which is the Secret Breakers tagline*)
- How does Brodie open the lock? (*she turns the catch on the lock*)
- Why do you think the author adds this detail? (*to allow readers to infer that Brodie is capable of unlocking the secret*)
- Why is the book wrapped in gold cloth? (*to make it look like treasure to protect it*)
- How do we know Brodie is nervous? (*shaking hands, pulse throbbing, difficulty breathing*)
- Why do you think the author decided to describe the book as being tied up with a cord? (*to symbolise how the characters will have to untie the mystery of lots of clues to be able to unlock the full secrets of the book*)
- Why does the writer use the phrase 'the cipher that had broken full grown men'? (*because it is the codes that are supposed to be broken/it is a play on words/it suggests that people have been damaged by trying to break the code*)
- Why does the author switch to a scene with Brodie's granddad now? (*to keep us waiting for the description of the book and therefore add to the tension/to remind us of her connection to the her granddad/to show us he is scared*)
- Why do you think the author chose to include a scene where Mr. Bray is looking at photographs? (*because he is looking at the past and memories too, like his granddaughter*)
- What can we infer from the fact that Mr. Bray holds the packet of photos to him? (*his memories are important to him/he is missing Brodie*)

**REFLECT:**

- Do you think it was a good idea to set the children a code in order to find the manuscript?
- Do you think Smithies should have told Friedman the truth about the number of children who have turned up?
- Talk about the description of the manuscript. Reflect on which page Brodie likes best.

**PLOT POINTS:**

- Consider the discussion between Brodie and Tusia. What more have we learnt about them e.g.: Tusia likes chess and her brothers work in Fiji. Can you add these details to your character notes?
- Why do you think Brodie doesn't explain everything about her parents to Tusia?

**ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

**AF5 – explain and comment on writers' use of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level**

Level 3: a few basic features of writer's use of language identified, but with little or no comment.

Level 4: some basic features of writer's use of language identified, simple comments on writer's choices.

Level 5: various features of writer's use of language identified, with some explanation, e.g. 'when it gets to the climax she uses short sentences which makes it more tense' comments show some awareness of the effect of writer's language choices.

**BONUS EXTRA:**

Use the photographs of the trunk and book to stimulate creative writing.

**FOLLOW UP:**

Watch the video of the opening of the trunk on [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) Find out more about MS 408 from the 'Secrets to Break' page.

## SESSION SIX: The Blooming of the Corpse Flower

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In this chapter, the children begin their code cracking lessons. They also undertake a test in order to officially become part of team Veritas. The test involves them working together to solve codes and puzzles. Initially they do not work well together but Brodie inspires the others to think about the code crackers from the past and how much they risked to be part of a team. Kerrith Vernan works out what Smithies is up to at Bletchley.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts

Year 4: Deduce characters' reasons for behaviour from their actions.

Year 5: Infer writers' perspectives from what is written and from what is implied.

Year 6: Understand underlying themes, causes and points of view.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to show character interaction and themes behind writing.

### EXTRACT SIX

### READING SKILL: DEDUCTION:

- Why do the three children keep losing lives? (*because they are not working together*)
- Why does Brodie glance at the window at the beginning of the extract? (*because she knows the adults are watching them as they work/to reinforce the idea that light gives knowledge*)
- Why do you think the author describes the message system as sounding like an erratic heartbeat? (*to reinforce the idea that Brodie is nervous*)
- What other evidence is there that Brodie is nervous? (*her hands are moist with sweat*)
- Why do you think Tusia is smiling midway through the extract? (*because she is enjoying Brodie telling Hunter off*)
- What makes Tusia stop smiling? (*when Brodie tells her she is just as bad*)
- What do the children focus on in order to stop arguing? (*the code-crackers who went before them*)
- How does the author show us the three children are thinking about them? (*because the initials on the table stare up at them*)
- What stylistic effect does the author use in the last line to add drama? (*alliteration – red ribbon fluttered*)
- What about this scene shows you that teamwork is an important theme for this writer? (*the children lose lives because they keep falling out*)
- How else does the author imply that team work is an important theme? (*reference to team work on getting into Station X etc. Title of book = The Power of Three*)

### REFLECT:

- What have you learnt about codes in this chapter and why people use them? (*keep information secret/maintain power*)
- Discuss Brodie's dream at the start of the chapter?

- Do you think dreams are important?
- Can you think of other stories where dreams have been important? (*Harry Potter series*)
- Why do you think the author includes a description of the dream? (*just to add description or it might be that she wants us to remember it later*)

#### **PLOT POINTS:**

- What is disinformation? (*writing added to codes to try and confuse the reader*)
- How does invisible ink work? (*the message is revealed if heat is added*)
- Why do the children dress as if they are from Pembroke College? (*maintain secrecy/ war time workers from Station X said they were based on HMS Pembroke*)
- How does the internal mail system work at Station X? (*vacuum pipes and containers*)

#### **ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

##### **AF3 – deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts**

Level 3: straightforward inference based on a single point of reference in the text.

Level 4: comments make inferences based on evidence from different points in the text, inferences often correct, but comments are not always rooted securely in the text or repeat narrative or content.

Level 5: comments develop explanation of inferred meanings drawing on evidence across the text, comments make inferences and deductions based on textual evidence, e.g. in drawing conclusions about a character's feelings on the basis of their speech and actions.

#### **FOLLOW UP:**

- Consider the importance of being in a team.
- Brodie says she had never been in a team before. Can readers relate to this?
- What are their experiences of being in a team?
- What are the pros and cons of being in a team?

## SESSION SEVEN: Elfin Urim

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In this chapter, the children have the Firebird letter shared with them. They understand the link between this and the Voynich Manuscript and they understand the role played by Professor Leo Van der Essen after the burning of Louvain Library in World War One.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts.

Year 4: Identify and summarise evidence from a text to support a hypothesis.

Year 5: Make notes on and use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas.

Year 6: Appraise a text quickly, deciding on its value, quality or usefulness.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow for note taking from information given

### EXTRACT SEVEN

### READING SKILL: LITERAL

- Who wrote the Firebird Letter? (*Professor Van der Essen*)
- Why is it referred to as 'the Firebird Code'? (*because it contains a code, mentions a phoenix and the envelope was sealed with a picture of a phoenix*)
- What does the word 'alchemist' mean? (*one who practises alchemy...the technique of combining things to find magical products like the water of life...or gold/can also mean one who uses the mind creatively*)
- So what is a worthy alchemist of words? (*one who uses words to make or find something incredible and does so with a worthy or 'good' heart*)
- What are Elfin Urim? (*other worldly lights*)
- List the numbers included in the letter. (*1, 25, 14*)
- Why do you think numbers have been included?
- What does Smithies believe them to be? (*dates*)
- Why do you think he thinks this? (*because of the use of st and th in 1st and 25th*)
- What is wrong with the name at the bottom of the letter? (*it says Arthur and not Leo*)
- How do we know this is not just a mistake? (*because we rarely get our own names wrong but it is easy to make slip ups with numbers and letters in codes*)
- How did Team Veritas get a copy of this letter? (*it was left in the care of solicitors for delivery to Friedman at Station X in the fiftieth year after Van der Essen's death*)
- Look at Brodie's notes on the lesson Smithies has given them. Can you use the notes to retell the main points of the lesson?
- Re read the chapter and make your own notes from the lesson Smithies gives. Use the whole chapter and decide which pieces of information are important to record and which ones you can afford to leave out of your notes. Discuss how it is best just to record key words, dates and phrases.
- How are your notes different to Brodie's?

### REFLECT:

- Do you believe the story about Van der Essen rescuing one manuscript from the fire of Louvain and burying it in a metal box in Ghent?
- Have a look at [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) and the 'Who's Who: Book One' page for more information about the professor.
- If you had to rescue one 'thing' not 'person' from a fire, what would it be?
- What does the fact that the Professor saved one single manuscript tell you about him?
- What does it tell you about the importance of the manuscript?

### PLOT POINTS:

- How do the stories of Voynich and Van der Essen connect in the story of *Secret Breakers*?
- How important is it that the candle clock is burning down?
- Do you think Team Veritas will have the answers needed before the candle burns out?
- Kerrith talks about having proof that Smithies is 'playing with fire'. This is an idiom. What does this mean? (*an expression where the words carry extra meaning*)
- What does the phrase mean? (*he is involved in something dangerous*)
- Why does Kerrith's phrase work well in this chapter? (*because of all the fire references and the candle clock burning down*)

### ASSESSMENT FOCUS:

**AF2 – understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text**

Level 3: simple, most obvious points identified though there may also be some misunderstanding.

Level 4: some relevant points identified comments supported by some generally relevant textual reference or quotation.

Level 5 : most relevant points clearly identified, including those selected from different places in the text. Comments generally supported by relevant textual reference or quotation, even when points made are not always accurate.

### FOLLOW UP:

- The chapter makes reference to the poems of Tennyson called *Idylls of the King*. Find out as much as you can about these poems. Look at the mention of Elfim Urim if you can!

## SESSION EIGHT: The Most Precious of Gifts

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In this chapter the children focus on the importance of the scabbard over the sword in the stories of King Arthur. This leads them to discover that the Firebird Code is referring to a section of writing from Thomas Malory's work called *Morte D'Arthur*. They find the section of text the Firebird Code is directing them to and therefore find the fourteen key words which will be needed to break the code. Meanwhile, Kerrith Vernan arrives in Bletchley.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts

Year Four: Use knowledge of different organisational features of texts to find information effectively.

Year Five: Compare different types of narrative and information texts and identify how they are structured.

Year Six: Understand how writers use different structures to create coherence and impact.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow focus on organisational issues regarding text.

### EXTRACT EIGHT

#### READING SKILL: LITERAL

The author uses quite a few different ways of presenting the text in this section to make the meaning as clear as possible. Talk about the different organisation skills used and why they were chosen.

- What words are written in italics? (*quotes from Malory's book or words needing extra emphasis.*)
- Why are these sections in italics? (*to show they are taken from another book and to add extra emphasis*)
- What other methods does the author use to make sections of text stand out? (*capital letters and quote marks*)
- Why does the author need certain words to have extra emphasis? (*because they are solutions to the code or a vital piece of information needed for the code*)
- Smithies thought the numbers in the letter were dates. What were they? (*references to books and chapters*)
- Why would one 'book' need to be divided into separate books as well as chapters? (*because it is very long/ because parts of the book are about different subjects/ because sections are written by different authors*)
- Can you think of other books apart from Malory's that are divided this way? (*the Bible*)
- What does the word 'scabbard' mean? (*protective sheath or container for a sword*)
- Why are parts of the section from Malory quite difficult to understand e.g.: what does the word 'ye' mean? (*it means you and the words are old fashioned because Malory wrote a long time ago*)
- Try taking the sections of Malory's writing and rewriting them in modern day English.
- What does Malory's title *Morte D'Arthur* mean? (*death of Arthur*)
- Why do you think a book about Arthur's life has this title? (*because somehow the death of Arthur is the most important thing about the story*)



**REFLECT:**

- Where had you seen this section of Malory's work before? (*at the very beginning of the book*)
- Why did the author include this here? (*as a clue to the code*)
- Did you remember it was there?

**PLOT POINTS:**

- The children have found the right section of Malory's writing. What do they have to do now? (*fit the fourteen key words from Malory's writing with the 'handle with care numbers' from the Firebird Code*)
- Can you work out how they can do this?
- Why do you think Kerrith has come to Bletchley?

**ASSESSMENT FOCUS:****AF2 – understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text**

Level 3: simple, most obvious points identified though there may also be some misunderstanding, e.g. about information from different places in the text some comments include quotations from or references to text, but not always relevant, e.g. often retelling or paraphrasing sections of the text rather than using it to support comment.

Level 4: some relevant points identified comments supported by some generally relevant textual reference or quotation, e.g. reference is made to appropriate section of text but is unselective and lacks focus.

level 5: most relevant points clearly identified, including those selected from different places in the text. Comments generally supported by relevant textual reference or quotation, even when points made are not always accurate.

**FOLLOW UP:**

Find a copy of *Morte d'Arthur*. Can you find any stories in this book that are also in *Idylls of the King*? What can you find out about Thomas Malory?

## SESSION NINE: A Flightless Bird

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In this chapter Brodie, Hunter and Tusia complete the breaking of the Firebird Code. They manage to arrange the 'handle with care' numbers with the letters from the key phrase in Malory's writing. Having solved the code and worked out the location of the Firebird Box (The Royal Pavilion Brighton) the children leave a message for Smithies in the internal mailing system. But in the night there is a break in and the message is taken. Kerrith Vernan reports back to the Director about what she has discovered. When the team leave for Brighton Level Five of the Black Chamber will not be far behind!

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 8: Engaging and responding to texts

Year 4: Interrogate texts to deepen and clarify understanding and response.

Year 5: Compare the usefulness of techniques such as visualisation, prediction and empathy in exploring the meaning of texts.

Year 6: Sustain engagement with longer texts, using different techniques to make the text come alive.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow for considering the 'other side of the story'.

### EXTRACT NINE

### READING SKILL: INFERENCE

- Why do you think this chapter is called 'A flightless Bird'? (*because in the highlighted section the Director is talking about relying on facts and not 'flights of fancy'/A flightless bird is a metaphor for fact*)
- How does the highlighted scene make you feel?
- Consider what the Director says to Kerrith. What do you make of what he says?
- What does the expression 'catch or bottle shadows' mean? (*to do the impossible*)
- Why do you think the author chose this particular simile to include? (*because she has used other 'light based' images when talking about Team Veritas*)
- Why does the author include the idea of chasing after the end of a rainbow? (*it is another light based metaphor and it is linked with mythic stories about rainbows*)
- According to mythic stories you have read or heard, what is at the end of a rainbow? (*a pot of gold*)
- 'He sniffed as if the folder he held was reeking an unbearable smell.' Why is this line included? (*to suggest that the Director finds all that Team Veritas and others who have tried to break the code of MS 408 totally repulsive*)
- Why does adding the use of another sense i.e.: smell, add to the feel of the scene? (*using other senses helps us to visualise the scene more clearly*)
- 'We are the keepers of secrets, the guardians of mystery.' What does this line mean? (*Level Five don't want anyone knowing the truth about MS 408*)
- How does the role of Level Five compare with the role of those in Team Veritas? (*Level Five are Secret Keepers and Team Veritas are Secret Breakers*)
- Imagine you are the Director. How would you read the lines he says to Kerrith?

- Visualise the scene. How do you feel about the team of Secret Breakers now? Do you think they are in danger from those in Level Five?
- Can you act out the scene? What would happen if you were a Secret Breaker and you heard what was said? What arguments would you have for continuing your search for truth?

#### **REFLECT:**

- Consider the description of the candle burning down at the start of this chapter. Did knowing the candle was near to burning out, add to the tension?
- Think about the code cracking part of the chapter. Did you manage to work with Brodie, Tusia and Hunter on the code?

#### **PLOT POINTS:**

- The vacuum message system is important to this chapter. Consider why the author showed us the system used before in earlier scenes in the book. (*so its use and the stealing of the message is not seen just as being convenient but an important part of life at Station X*)

#### **ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

**AF5 – explain and comment on writers’ use of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level**

Level 3: a few basic features of writer’s use of language identified, but with little or no comment.

Level 4: some basic features of writer’s use of language identified.

Level 5: various features of writer’s use of language identified, with some explanation. Comments show some awareness of the effect of writer’s language choices.

#### **FOLLOW UP:**

Can you use the coded letters in the chapter to write your own messages? Can you use the same method of code making to produce your own code i.e.: find a key phrase you can agree on, then number the letters according to the method Brodie, Hunter and Tusia used.

This system was used a lot in World War One but you have to be very careful about numbering the letters or the code breaks down!

# SESSION TEN: Beyond the Thunder Dragons

## CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

This chapter sees the team travelling to Brighton. During the train journey Smithies explains about the work of Operation Veritas being against the rules. Brodie has to decide whether she will complete the journey to the Royal Pavilion...or give up now! Resolving to continue the adventure, the team reach the Pavilion and begin to piece together pieces from the Firebird Code. Just as they work out that the Firebird Box is probably hidden in a roof top room, they hear that Kerrith Vernan has reached the Pavilion too!

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

### 10: Text structure and organisation

Year 4: Organise text into paragraphs to distinguish between different information, events or processes. Use adverbs and conjunctions to establish cohesion within paragraphs.

Year 5: Experiment with the order of sections and paragraphs to achieve different effects. Change the order of material within a paragraph, moving the topic sentence.

Year 6: Use varied structures to shape and organise text coherently. Use paragraphs to achieve pace and emphasis.

## SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to help focus on 'setting' description

## EXTRACT TEN

## READING SKILL: DEDUCTION

- Re-read the extract and make some sort of artistic response to the words. You could attempt to draw what you hear described or make a collage of images and colours that the scene brings to mind.
- Why does the extract begin with 'Brodie tried to take it all in'? (*this acts like a topic sentence and lets us know that what is to follow will include a description of all she sees*)
- Can you think of another topic sentence to set the scene?
- Look at the use of commas and semi colons throughout the piece. Consider why each is used where it is.
- Work through each paragraph and write a sentence to sum up what is being described in each.
- Why does Hunter think Brodie's obsession with stories will be helpful? (*because there are so many images from mythic stories in the Pavilion*)
- Why do you think the author chose to describe a clock? (*to remind us the team are racing against time*)
- Look at the length of the paragraphs. What effect does the very short paragraph 'But the Banqueting Room was something else' have on the reader? (*short paragraph contrasts with longer ones to add variety and give shape to the overall piece*)
- The table is described as groaning. Can tables really groan? (*no!*)
- What is this an example of? (*personification where something inanimate is given human characteristics*)
- Why does the author use this technique? (*the use of the word groaning suggests the table is tired because there are so many heavy things on it therefore demonstrates wealth*)
- Why does Tusia say the lights are wrong? (*because according to rules of mythic stories the dragon should always fly higher than the phoenix*)

### **REFLECT:**

- Try and describe the inside of the Royal pavilion to each other using the extract as a guide.
- Attempt to rewrite the extract altering the order and placement of details. What effect does this have?

### **PLOT POINTS:**

- Discuss whether you think Brodie and the others were right to stay with Team Veritas now they know the Study Group is against the rules.
- Look at Smithies speech about rules. Can you think of examples in history where rules were broken because they were wrong? (*Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat to a white bus traveller*)
- Look again at Smithies' explanation of the Plato story. Look at the use of shadow and light and consider why the author included this story.

### **ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

#### **AF4 – identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level**

Level 3: a few basic features of organisation at text level identified, with little or no linked comment.

Level 4: some structural choices identified with simple comment. Some basic features of organisation at text level identified.

Level 5: comments on structural choices show some general awareness of author's craft, various features relating to organisation at text level, including form, are clearly identified, with some explanation.

### **FOLLOW UP:**

Find out as much as you can about the Royal Pavilion. Follow the links on [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) 'Book One: Locations Visited' in order to take a virtual tour. Try some creative writing based on what you see!

## SESSION ELEVEN: Above a Painted Sky

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In this chapter the children use the 'handle with care' clue to find the doorway to the secret roof top room. They search desperately for the Firebird Box but are followed by Kerrith and others from Level Five. Hiding under a trap door, Brodie at last finds the Firebird Box. But the team's hiding place is discovered and Brodie, Hunter and Miss Tandari have to make a death defying escape. Hunter is injured and can't go on and so Miss Tandari stays with him as Brodie moves on alone in her bid to get the Firebird Box to safety.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts.

Year 4: Use knowledge of different organisational features of texts to find information effectively.

Year 5: Compare different types of narrative and information texts and identify how they are structured.

Year 6: Understand how writers use different structures to create coherence and impact.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to help focus on techniques for building tension.

### EXTRACT ELEVEN

#### READING SKILL: DEDUCTION

- How does Brodie know that Kerrith is above them...and that she is not alone? (*footsteps*)
- Why does Brodie suddenly want to sneeze? (*the dust coming through the floorboards*)
- Why is it so important that she doesn't? (*it will give their hiding place away*)
- Look at the third paragraph in the extract. Why doesn't the author actually describe what is happening? (*because Brodie can't see and so this is from Brodie's point of view*)
- Would it end like this? In a roof space, in the half-light. Hidden and afraid. What techniques are used in this paragraph? (*question to draw in reader/short choppy sentence*)
- What is the impact of these techniques? (*allows for empathy and adds to tension*)
- Compare the length of the paragraphs in this extract with the one looked at in the previous session (Extract Ten). Why does one this one use much shorter sentences and paragraphs? (*dramatic writing needs to be different in style to descriptive writing*)
- At the end of this extract, Brodie finds the Firebird Box. How does this make you feel?
- 'Her breathing slowed. Her muscles loosened and as she lifted her head she was aware of a shaft of light, bright and strong and bathing her in a delicious warmth.' What parts of this section lead you to believe that Brodie has relaxed? (*breathing slowed; muscles loosened; delicious warmth*)
- The end of the extract uses dramatic irony. Brodie feels very safe and warm...but ironically it is because the trapdoor has opened and she has been found. What is the impact of ending the extract like this? (*we move from being happy she has found the box to suddenly being very scared for her*)

### **REFLECT:**

- Look at the scene where Brodie, Hunter and Miss Tandari are climbing down the rope? How are similar writing techniques used in this scene to add to the tension?
- Did you think Hunter was dead?
- Do you think Brodie thought Hunter was dead?

### **PLOT POINTS:**

- Consider the clue about the Chinese writing. Did you work this out?
- What other elements of the coded clue are we still trying to solve? (*relevance of scabbard and cloak*)
- Do you think Brodie will escape with the Firebird Box? Predict what will happen next.

### **ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

#### **AF3 – deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts**

Level 3: straightforward inference based on a single point of reference in the text.

Level 4: comments make inferences based on evidence from different points in the text, inferences often correct, but comments are not always rooted securely in the text or repeat narrative or content.

Level 5: comments develop explanation of inferred meanings drawing on evidence across the text, comments make inferences and deductions based on textual evidence, e.g. in drawing conclusions about a character's feelings on the basis of their speech and actions.

### **FOLLOW UP:**

- Write your own scene where characters are being chased and have to escape. Use short sentences and questions to draw in the reader to add to tension and develop empathy.

### **BONUS EXTRA:**

- Look at the photograph of the Firebird Box.
- Can you write a description which uses writing style like that used in Extract Ten rather than Extract Eleven to demonstrate the difference between descriptive and dramatic writing?

## SESSION TWELVE: From Ashes to Ashes

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In this chapter, Brodie is confronted in the Royal Pavilion Music Room by Kerrith. Meanwhile, we see that Friedman has arrived in Brighton and is trying to get into the Pavilion and we see Brodie's granddad collecting a letter from a safety deposit box. The narrative switches between the three strands of the story to add to the drama. In the Music Room, the Firebird Box is opened and it appears to contain only ash. Kerrith vindictively tells Brodie that her mother didn't die in an accident, but that she was killed so Brodie has to cope with two terrible revelations.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts.

Year 4: Deduce characters' reasons for behaviour from their actions and explain how ideas are developed in non-fiction texts.

Year 5: Infer writers' perspectives from what is written and from what is implied.

Year 6: Understand underlying themes, causes and points of view.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow for contrasting view points

### EXTRACT TWELVE

### READING SKILL: INFERENCE

- Why is this chapter called 'From Ashes to Ashes'? (*because this is a phrase used in funerals and this chapter sees what we think is the end of the quest/it also refers to the ash in the box so it has a double meaning*)
- What other words prompt funeral images in this extract? (*ash, dust, rest, tears, petals, ghost, blood red, bell, sorrow*)
- 'She reached with the fingers of her other hand, pale ghost letters from the kiss of the ash still visible against the skin. At her touch they turned to dust and blew away.' What are these lines trying to show? (*that the search and the quest is finally over/ dust to dust, ashes to ashes*)
- What is Kerrith saying about the Manuscript in this extract? (*that it is a fake and that Brodie has been foolish to try and find out more*)
- Do you think Brodie should believe her?
- How does the section about the castle let you know that the author thinks Brodie should still believe? (*because the castle is standing firm despite the waves against it/ it is a simile which shows how Brodie is feeling*)
- Why does Brodie hold onto her locket? (*because it reminds her of her mum/it contains a picture of the castle from MS 408 and so this mirrors the image of the sand castle resisting the waves*)



### REFLECT:

- Brodie was unharmed in the climb down the rope and only hurts her arm when she is no longer holding the Firebird Box. Do you think this is an important detail and if so what is the author implying by including this detail? (*yes/the box is 'keeping Brodie safe'/it is like the scabbard to Arthur's sword and this is an important clue for later*)
- How do you feel now that you know the box is empty apart from ash?
- Do you believe the quest is over?

### PLOT POINTS:

- Do you think it is important that there seems to be only one way out of the Music Room but in fact there is a secret tunnel? (*yes/things are not what they seem*)
- Consider the scene where Granddad empties the safety deposit box. What do you notice about the letter he takes? (*it is addressed to 'Robbie' and it shows the indentation of a key/it was sent by Brodie's mum from Belgium before she died*)
- Consider the idea of a Pendragon. How does Kerrith's view and Friedman's differ?

### ASSESSMENT FOCUS:

#### **AF6 – identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints, and the overall effect of the text on the reader**

Level 3: comments identify main purpose or express personal response but with little awareness of writer's viewpoint or effect on reader.

Level 4: main purpose identified and simple comments show some awareness of writer's viewpoint. Simple comment on overall effect on reader.

Level 5: main purpose clearly identified, often through general overview. Viewpoint in texts clearly identified, with some, often limited, explanation. General awareness of effect on the reader, with some, often limited, explanation.

### FOLLOW UP:

- Look at [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) and the page on 'Book One: Locations Visited'. Watch the video which shows you the underground tunnel linking the Dome to the Pavilion.
- Talk about what Brodie discovered when she was in the Music Room. Use the 'Hot Seating Technique' to get her to explain what she has found out and what she feels.
- Imagine you are one of the other characters in the story. How would you feel when Brodie tells you what the box contains?
- Find out why the term Pendragon is connected to the stories of King Arthur.

## SESSION THIRTEEN: Reborn from the Flames

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In this chapter we have the first mention of ‘Suppressors’ as Kerrith is telling the Director that the Firebird Box contained only ash. Mr Bray sees a solicitor and collects Fabyan from the airport. Meanwhile, Team Veritas believe the quest is over and that the work at Station X must finish. However, Brodie makes the connection between the idea of a scabbard and the Firebird Box. They look more carefully and find a message hidden in the hinge. It has disinformation on it, but after adding heat a secret message is revealed.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 7: Understanding and interpreting texts.

Year 4: Use knowledge of word structures and origins to develop their understanding of word meanings.

Year 5: Distinguish between everyday use of words and their subject-specific use.

Year 6: Explore how word meanings change when used in different contexts.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to show development of understanding of characters.

### EXTRACT THIRTEEN

### READING SKILL: DEDUCTION

- Why does the title of the chapter lead you to believe that the quest isn’t over? (*use of ‘reborn’*)
- What animal is reborn from the flames? (*a phoenix*)
- Why are there so many references to fire and flames in this chapter? (*because fire could be an ending... consider the use of the word ‘fired’ when someone loses their job, or firing squad when someone is executed... but in the case of the phoenix it signifies rebirth.*)
- Look at the use of speech in this extract and consider the use of grammar to make it clear who is speaking. (*reinforce understanding of new speaker/ new line rule etc.*)
- How can you tell Tandi does not understand at first? (*because she moves towards the fire alarm and is going to evacuate the building*)
- At what point in the extract do you realise she understands? (*Miss Tandari’s dark eyes were widening now.*)
- Why did the author use this image to show understanding? (*because our eyes widen to let more light in and the author has used the idea of ‘light being knowledge’ earlier on in the book*)
- What is disinformation? (*writing added to trick someone trying to break the code*)
- How is the Firebird Box like King Arthur’s scabbard? (*it’s the box itself that counts, not what was inside*)
- When else in the story was invisible ink used? (*on Brodie’s socks at the very beginning of the story – that ink was activated by water and not heat*)

### REFLECT:

- Do you think fire is a good or a bad thing?
- Consider all the images that are connected with fire. (*power, death, new life, heat*)
- Do you know any myths or legends about fire? (*Prometheus story and the phoenix story*)

### PLOT POINTS:

- Had you worked out that the Firebird Box itself was important?
- What clues did you use elsewhere from the text to help you? (*scabbard images/ emphasis on not being obvious/importance of the underground tunnel for escape/Miss Tandari's lesson about not ignoring details*)
- Can you find a clue about ironing papers early on in the story? (*in Chapter Three, Brodie tells Hunter he should have ironed his information about Bletchley because his dog sat on it*)

### ASSESSMENT FOCUS:

#### **AF2 – understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text**

Level 3: simple, most obvious points identified though there may also be some misunderstanding, e.g. about information from different places in the text some comments include quotations from or references to text, but not always relevant, e.g. often retelling or paraphrasing sections of the text rather than using it to support comment.

Level 4: some relevant points identified comments supported by some generally relevant textual reference or quotation, e.g. reference is made to appropriate section of text but is unselective and lacks focus.

Level 5: most relevant points clearly identified, including those selected from different places in the text. Comments generally supported by relevant textual reference or quotation, even when points made are not always accurate.

### FOLLOW UP:

- Investigate some mythic stories about 'fire'. Can you find out as much as possible about stories concerning the phoenix? Present your work in the most interesting way you can. Can you write a poem, or produce a collage?
- Experiment with writing with lemon juice and then heating the paper to reveal the secret code.

## SESSION FOURTEEN: The Golden Key

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

The Director and Kerith arrive at Bletchley and they announce they are breaking up the work of Station X. But Granddad and Fabyan come to the rescue with funds and the law on their side. Friedman and Brodie get to talk and in the final scenes of the book, Brodie connects the golden key he wears with the key hole in the Firebird Box. All have determined to stay at Station X and continue the quest and with the 'discovery' of the key, the team may have more clues to go on.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### 11: Sentence structure and organisation

Year 4: Clarify meaning and point of view by using varied sentence structure (phrases, clauses and adverbials).

Year 5: Adapt sentence construction to different text-types, purposes and readers.

Year 6: Express subtle distinctions of meaning, including hypothesis, speculation and supposition, by constructing sentences in varied ways.

Use commas to mark clauses, and use the apostrophe for possession.

Punctuate sentences accurately, including using speech marks and apostrophes.

Use punctuation to clarify meaning in complex sentences.

### SPOTLIGHT ON TEXT:

Chosen to allow analysis of sentence structure and its impact on meaning.

### EXTRACT FOURTEEN

#### READING SKILL: LITERAL

- What phrases does the author use to show that Brodie is trying to piece together information in this scene? (*it was then Brodie remembered/ trying to hide the surprise in her voice/ eyes narrowing/ heart racing/ tucking hair behind ears/ connections firing in her mind*)
- Which word is used to describe the actions of the connections in her mind? (*firing*)
- Why is this an interesting word to use? (*because many of the images in this book are based on fire*)
- Is the use of the word 'firing' positive here? (*yes, because she is making connections*)
- Look at the setting out of speech. How can we tell Friedman is feeling uncomfortable? (*he hides the key/ his face is colouring*)
- How does this extract show that Brodie thinks the key has more meaning than Friedman realises? (*because of what she says and because he says it was a sign*)
- 'Yes. No. I thought perhaps it was just a sign, you know.' His face was colouring in the moonlight.
- 'A sign of what?' Brodie's voice was rising. 'Brodie. Things were complicated between – well, your mother and me. We had feelings for each other. 'Look at the grammar in this section. (*use of commas and dashes to show pauses and thinking time*) How does it let us know how the characters are feeling? (*shows awkwardness and time for thought*)
- Think about the meaning of the word 'key'. Does it have another meaning than a key to a lock? (*answer to a code/important thing*)

- What is your hypothesis about what the key will do?
- What evidence from the text do you have to support this view?
- Look at the final section about the Jumbo Rush Elephant. Why does this author add this here? (*to help us realise that all the clues we have had from the beginning are important*)

#### **REFLECT:**

- Where do you think the letter to Friedman is? (*Brodie's Granddad collected it from the safety deposit box*)
- Did you remember the key being mentioned the first time we saw Friedman in Chapter One in the cafe?
- Did you think that Brodie's mother's visit to Belgium was related to Professor Van der Essen?
- Why do you think *Secret Breakers* has a tagline inviting you to 'unlock the truth'? (*to play on the many meanings of the words 'key' and unlock*)

#### **PLOT POINTS:**

- How do you think the book will end?
- How important do you think Friedman's friendship with Brodie's mum was?
- What else did Brodie's Mum send back from Belgium? (*paper with holes in*)

#### **ASSESSMENT FOCUS:**

**AF5 – explain and comment on writers' use of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level**

Level 3: a few basic features of writer's use of language identified, but with little or no comment.

Level 4: some basic features of writer's use of language identified.

Level 5: various features of writer's use of language identified, with some explanation. Comments show some awareness of the effect of writer's language choices.

#### **FOLLOW UP:**

- Have one last discussion about how the book will end. Record your predictions so you can look back and see if anyone predicts correctly.

## SESSION FIFTEEN: Epilogue and Conclusion

### CHAPTER/LESSON SYNOPSIS:

In the book's epilogue, during a night time meeting in the Music Room of Bletchley Park, Friedman's key unlocks a secret compartment in the Firebird Box to reveal the workings of a musical box. Smithies remembers the strip of paper sent to him by Brodie's Mum just before she died and Brodie feeds this into the workings. The music box plays a piece of music that Mr Bray recognises as being composed by Elgar. The team have a new puzzle to solve. How is the music of the British composer connected to the unread book? Where will their quest for the truth take them? And will the team be safe if Level Five is watching them?

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

#### 8: Engaging and responding to texts

Year 4: Read extensively favourite authors or genres and experiment with other types of text.

Year 5: Reflect on reading habits and preferences and plan personal reading goals.

Year 6: Read extensively and discuss personal reading with others, including in reading groups.

\*Explore why and how writers write, including through face-to-face and online contact with authors.

### ASSESSMENT FOCUS

#### AF7 – relate texts to their social, cultural and historical traditions

Level 3: some simple connections between texts identified. Recognition of some features of the context of texts, e.g. historical setting, social or cultural background.

Level 4: features common to different texts or versions of the same text identified, with simple comment, e.g. characters, settings, presentational features simple comment on the effect that the reader's or writer's context has on the meaning of texts, e.g. historical context, place, social relationships.

Level 5: comments identify similarities and differences between texts, or versions, with some explanation. Some explanation of how the contexts in which texts are written and read contribute to meaning.

### CONCLUSION:

Now the entire book has been read, it is time to discuss the whole reading experience and make comparisons between this text and others that have been read. Use the following points and discussion ideas to structure extended follow up and initiate exploration of other texts about code cracking and King Arthur stories.

### REFLECT:

- Were any of your predictions about the end of the story correct?
- Did you work out that Smithies had the paper needed for the music box?
- What do you know about Elgar?
- Do you think it is possible to write a code in music?
- What do you think will happen next in the adventure of the *Secret Breakers*?
- Who was your favourite character in the story?
- What Secret Breaking skill do you think you most possess?
- How is this story similar to others you have read?

- How would you describe this story to other readers?
- Can you write a review of the story so other readers will know what to expect? Try and include the following elements in your review: summary of plot; description of main characters; examples of events that were sad, scary, exciting, surprising.
- Make notes about the truths the Secret Breakers have unlocked so far.

#### **FOLLOW UP:**

- Spend some time exploring [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) How does the information here help you understand more about the story?
- Look at the author note at the back of the book. Does it interest you to know which parts of the story are true?
- Can you find out more about life at Bletchley Park during the war and the lives of real code crackers?
- Make a character profile of each of the Secret Breakers. Could you be a Secret Breaker? How would your profile read?
- Write a letter to Smithies telling him you want to be a Secret Breaker. How would you persuade him to let you join?
- Set some coded tasks for others in your class? Would any of them pass the test and be chosen to be a Secret Breaker?

#### **AND FINALLY:**

H.L. Dennis the author of *Secret Breakers* would love to know what you thought of her story. Contact her via the website [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) or write her a letter and send it to [caitlin.lomas@hachettechildrens.co.uk](mailto:caitlin.lomas@hachettechildrens.co.uk) H.L. Dennis is happy to make school visits and so if you would like her to come to your school, send a request to [helen@hldennis.com](mailto:helen@hldennis.com) or [caitlin.lomas@hachettechildrens.co.uk](mailto:caitlin.lomas@hachettechildrens.co.uk)

In the meantime, the quest continues with *Orphan of the Flames* Book Two in the series. Look out for more in the *SECRET BREAKERS* adventure in all good book shops.

HAPPY SECRET BREAKING!



# Part Four:

## The rest of the series

There are six books in the *Secret Breakers* series for children to enjoy and get hooked on. We know that allocating more lesson time to a second book is tricky, but the following information is intended to help you steer children towards later books and suggest activities that could be fed back into the classroom which demonstrate the pleasure children have gained from reading independently. Although the books are best read in publication order, it is possible to read them out of order as each one contains a self-contained code that links to the major story arc of the series.



### Book Two: Orphan of the Flames

The team of code-crackers face a new code that has never been solved. Brodie, Hunter and Tusia are back at Station X, the secret code-cracking station at Bletchley Park. And they are still wrestling with the great unanswered question: what secret lies behind the ancient, coded Voynich Manuscript? Their first adventure left them with a musical box that plays a tune by the composer, Elgar. Elgar loved codes.

At once they are off on a new search which takes them to the stories behind Elgar's famous music and a coded letter he wrote to a young friend, Dorabella. The 'Dorabella Cipher' has never, ever been solved. Now our team of code-breakers are on a twisting trail via medieval book burnings in Florence, a mysterious boy known as the Orphan of the Flames, and a one-time famous prisoner in London's Newgate

Prison who wrote about King Arthur. Where is it all leading? And will they survive, when hot on their trail is a secret organisation that has always thwarted the search for Truth and is prepared to do anything to stop them.

Possible activities:

- Find out about the composer Elgar and present finding to the class
- Look at maps of the Malvern hills and discuss the setting of Book Two
- Find out about the Mail Rail system in London
- Invent a coded language based on the one used by Elgar in the Dorabella Cipher
- Consider the character of Friedman in this story and draw up a character profile
- Find out about the legends of King Arthur and the different versions that were written
- Investigate the history of Newgate Prison



### Book Three: The Knights of Neustria

Team Veritas are back at Bletchley Park where a secret message hidden in a Shakespeare Portfolio pulls them into a new code-cracking adventure. Their investigations lead them to the writings of Sir Francis Bacon. Soon, they uncover the history of the Knights of Neustria, a brotherhood that goes back to the time of King Arthur charged with protecting a legendary secret.

But are they any closer to their goal – to unravel the secret behind the ancient coded Voynich Manuscript? The stakes are getting higher as our young trio chase their quest from Cambridge to a terrifying struggle along the currents of the surging River Wye. Only one step behind them is the secret organisation who will stop at nothing to block them from discovering the truth ...



Possible activities:

- Put together a presentation on the life and works of Shakespeare
- Investigate anagrams and use the details on [www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com) to see how other anagrams could have been included in this story
- Find out about the hunt for Shakespeare's treasure in the River Wye
- Write a news report about the activities of the team of Secret Breakers in Chepstow
- Investigate code cracking departments in other countries including the USA. What can you find out about Riverbanks lab?
- Find out about the links in legend to the Knights of Neustria and King Arthur. Find out as much as you can about Sir Bedivere.



#### **Book Four: Tower of the Winds**

The Knights of Neustria's quest is clearer to Team Veritas now – but so is their understanding of the terrible enemy they are up against. People are going missing. No one at Station X is safe anymore. But there are still important truths to uncover.

Which secret organization is protecting the work of the Knights of Neustria and do they know who is buried in the unmarked Shepherd's Tomb at Shugborough Hall? Will the story of the mysterious treasure ship 'The Covadogna' help the team of secret breakers discover more about the world described in the ancient coded Voynich Manuscript? And will every member of the team survive the race against time when the sinister Black Chamber chooses to leave them all a terrifying message?

Possible activities:

- Put together a sketchbook showing the locations visited at Shugborough Hall in this story
- Use history books and webpages to find out as much as possible about Lord Anson and the Covadogna
- Find out about the Cambridge Apostles
- Investigate the existence of other Secret Societies
- Look at how Leonardo Da Vinci used mirror writing



#### **Book Five: The Pirate's Sword**

Team Veritas have been searching for the truth. But sometimes the truth is hard to handle. No longer safe in England, the team from Station X must escape to the United States of America where they embark on an epic treasure hunt. It starts in New York City where they track down a precious ring once owned by a Knight of Neustria. From there, on to Washington DC to look for clues in the largest library in the world – and then a trek across the Blue Ridge Mountains in search for treasure hidden in a long forgotten cavern.

The mystery of the coded Voynich Manuscript is getting closer ... but so is the sinister Black Chamber who is following their every step. And for one of the team, it could be their last ...

Possible activities:

- Research the Library of Congress and put together a sketchbook showing some of the statues and art works inside
- Find out about the American Declaration of Independence and try and find out what parts of it means and why it was written

- Look at websites about the Beale Papers. Are there other codes about buried treasure?
- Reconsider the legends of Arthur and discuss why aspects discovered in *The Power of Three* are important in this book too
- Look carefully for hidden codes in the cover of the book
- Can you use the Beale Paper code to write your own messages?



### **Book Six: Circle of Fire**

The time for answers has arrived. After the death of a much loved friend, Team Veritas has even more to fight for. At the University of Yale, in the underground vaults of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the team finally get to see the real live Voynich Manuscript. Amongst stories of giants, betrayal and death, the language of the most mysterious manuscript in the world is finally understood. An ancient secret is broken.

And now Team Veritas know their final quest: to journey to the real Avalon – the island where truth and legend meet. But they do not travel alone. There are some who seek revenge. And there are others who demand an impossible sacrifice – only then can the words of the Firebird Code be completely understood. With danger around every corner, can the Secret Breakers finally unlock the truth?

The *SECRET BREAKERS* series concludes in this dramatic and satisfying finale.

Possible activities:

- Put together a presentation on MS 408 and what you think it might be about
- Look at other theories about the translation of MS 408
- Find out as much as you can about Avalon and present the stories about this place to your class
- Investigate other unsolved codes. Can you think of another problem for the Secret Breakers to tackle in further adventures?
- Discuss how the theme of book burning and censorship ran through the six stories
- Explore how censorship affects what is read today

**The activities listed are merely suggestions of the type of work that could be completed by children to extend their enjoyment of the series.**

**[www.hldennis.com](http://www.hldennis.com)** is full of background information and details about all six books in the series and there are also challenges listed on each book page which could be used to extend the children's enjoyment of the series as a whole and feed back into class work.

**Thank you once again for choosing to use *Secret Breakers* in your classroom!  
May you and your class enjoy the time you spend with Team Veritas!**

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