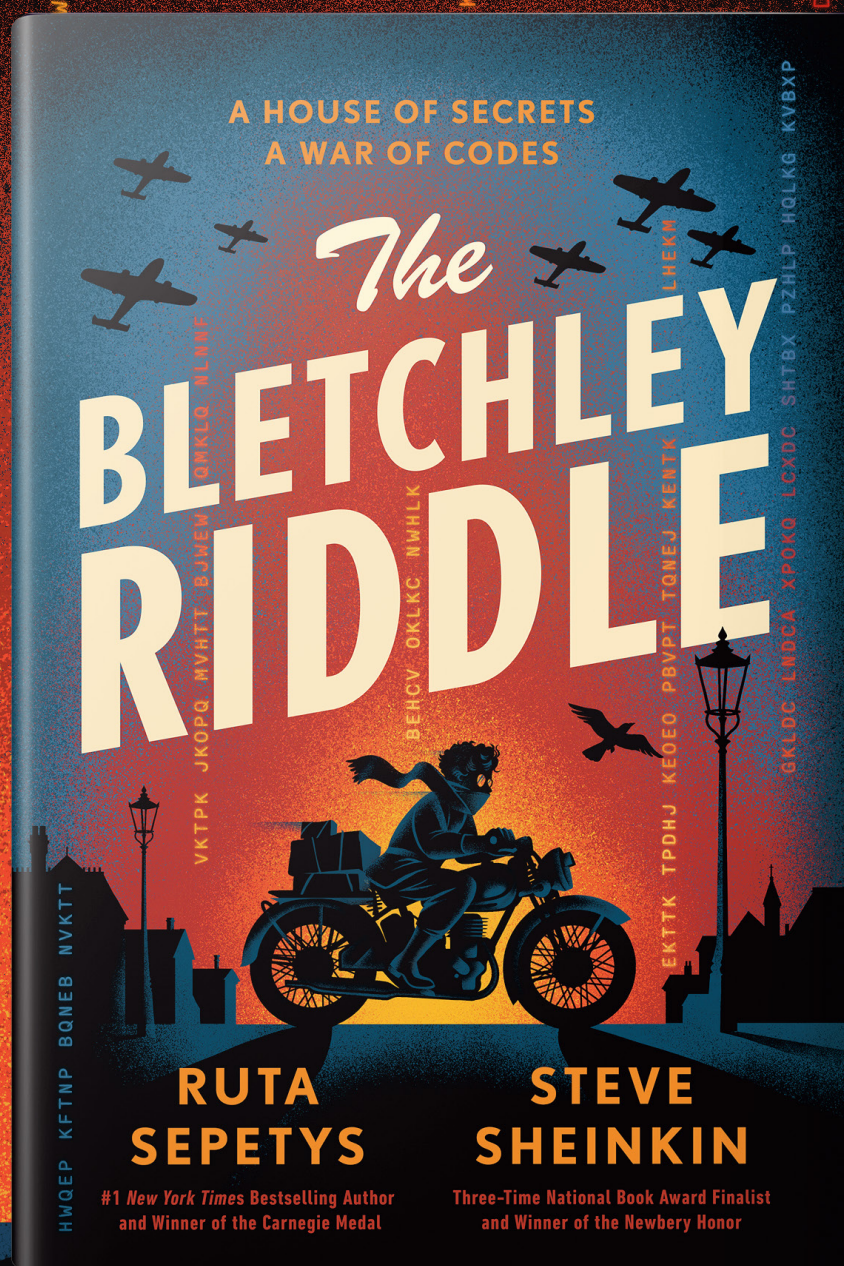


A DISCUSSION GUIDE TO



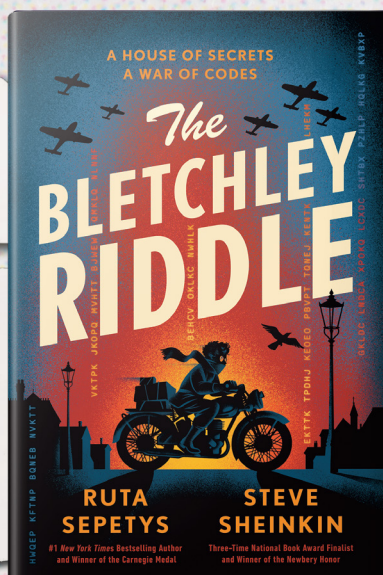
"Sepetys and Sheinkin have written a thrilling World War II code-breaking adventure filled with ciphers, secrets, and spies."

—ALAN GRATZ,
New York Times bestselling author of Refugee



★ **"Historical fiction
AT ITS BEST."**
—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ **"IMPRESSIVE ...
with broad appeal to
both WWII and mystery
enthusiasts."**
—*School Library Journal*, starred review



★ **"Swift, snappy, and
SUSPENSFUL."**
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ **"Enormously
entertaining, expertly
researched ...
EXCELLENT."**
—*Booklist*, starred review

ABOUT THE BOOK

A stunning collaboration between award-winning and bestselling authors Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin, this middle grade historical adventure follows two siblings at Bletchley Park, the home of WWII codebreakers, as they try to unravel a mystery surrounding their mother's disappearance.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



RUTA SEPETYS (RutaSepetys.com) is an internationally acclaimed, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of historical fiction published in over sixty countries and forty languages. Her novels have won or been shortlisted for more than forty book prizes and are included on more than sixty state award lists. Winner of the Carnegie Medal, Ruta is passionate about the power of history and literature to foster global awareness and connectivity. Ruta was born and raised in Michigan and now lives with her family in Nashville, Tennessee. Follow her on Instagram [@RutaSepetysAuthor](#) and on Twitter and Facebook at [@RutaSepetys](#).



STEVE SHEINKIN is the renowned author of fast-paced, cinematic nonfiction histories, including *Impossible Escape*, *Fallout*, *Undeclared*, *Born to Fly*, *The Port Chicago 50*, and *Bomb*. His accolades include a Newbery Honor, three Boston Globe–Horn Book Awards, a Sibert Medal and Honor, and three National Book Award finalist honors. He lives in Saratoga Springs, New York, with his wife and two children. He can be found online at [SteveSheinkin.com](#). Follow him on social media [@SteveSheinkin](#) and on Facebook at [Facebook.com/Steve.Sheinkin](#).

This guide was written by MARY GIUFFRE and ERIN O'LEARY. Mary and Erin met while teaching together at a middle school in Massachusetts. It was there they earned both a reputation and title: The Crazy Reading Ladies. This reading specialist and ELA teacher-turned-principal stop at nothing to motivate adolescents to read. Their passion is putting the right books in the right hands at the right time and empowering teachers to be champions of literacy. Over the last decade, their school-wide reading initiative, All In!™ has been implemented in schools in Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Florida. In 2017 they authored the YA version of *Battle of the Books* for Random House Publishing, Co. In their ongoing efforts to match today's students with high-quality literature, they've worked with a wide variety of authors including Brigid Kemmerer, Kekla Magoon, Ellen Hopkins, Jack Gantos, Ruta Sepetys, Steve Sheinkin, and R. J. Palacio. Sought-after presenters and teacher-trainers, they have been featured at local and international conferences. Follow their trials and triumphs at [crazyreadingladies.blogspot.com](#) and [@allinreading](#).

A MISSION FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS!

The Bletchley Riddle is inspired by Bletchley Park, one of the greatest secrets of World War II. Your mission is to share this story with your readers! This guide features discussion questions and activities for your class or library to help bring *The Bletchley Riddle* to life with your readers. If you aren't sure where to start with how to share, below are some ideas for you. (And remember . . . You are bound by the Official Secrets Act to share this book!)

- ✓ **READ ALOUD:** With short, page-turning chapters, this is a fantastic read-aloud to share with your readers!
- ✓ **ALL-SCHOOL/COMMUNITY READS:** *The Bletchley Riddle* is a high interest read with an accessible reading level, making this a great book to share as an all-school or community read. Find more tips and ideas for this on the last page of the guide!
- ✓ **BOOK CLUBS:** Perfect for book clubs of any size!
- ✓ **CROSS-CURRICULUM TIE-INS:**
 - **Social Studies:** Bletchley Park is a unique and unsung part of WWII history. *The Bletchley Riddle* is a fun way to engage your students as a supplement to your WWII units
 - **Math:** Coding and math are a big part of *The Bletchley Riddle*. The book offers a fun entry point into math as well as a great opportunity to connect math and ELA.
 - **Character Education:** *The Bletchley Riddle* is a high-stakes adventure and features many characters in the book who must make decisions that test their values in order to serve a larger purpose. Consider using this book to discuss ethical decision-making with your classroom.
- ✓ **THEMES:** If you're looking to use the book around a certain theme for your class or library, *The Bletchley Riddle* covers the following themes:

Family Relationships

Overcoming Challenges

Hidden Heroes

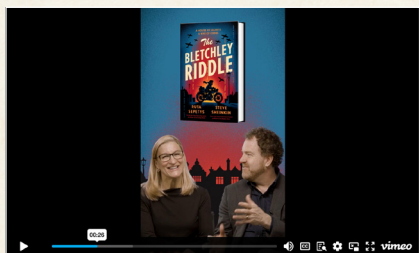
Friendship

Secrecy

Coming-of-Age

Honor

Character Education



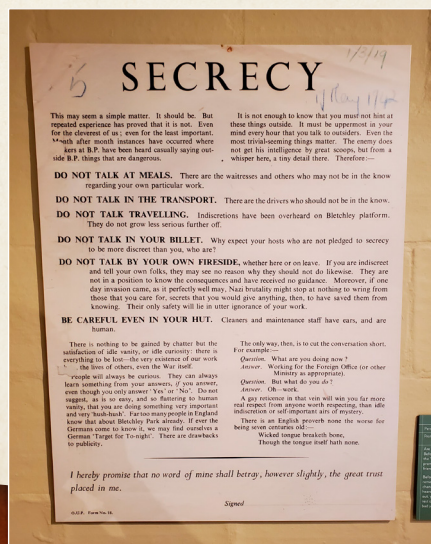
PRE-READING

Prior to reading, [share this video](#) of authors Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin introducing *The Bletchley Riddle*.

Ask readers:

- What do you know about Bletchley Park?
- Do you know anything about the Official Secrets Act? Would you sign it?
- Ask what they think will happen in the book.

Photo by Steve Sheinkin of an example copy of the Official Secrets Act.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In chapter 2, we are introduced to Lizzie, who immediately declares, “Allow me to explain something. I’m lying.” How do you trust a narrator who tells you that she’s lying? In what ways does Lizzie lie to people in the story?
2. Gran always calls our heroine by her given name—Elizabeth—proclaiming, “Nicknames such as ‘Lizzie’ are reserved for barmaids and axe murderers, of which you are neither.” What’s the difference between the names *Elizabeth* and *Lizzie*? Why does Gran react so strongly to Lizzie’s preference? Do you have nicknames you prefer or dislike?
3. Presented with the same information, Jakob and Lizzie come to different conclusions about their mother’s fate. In the beginning of the book, are they more alike or different? How is this a source of conflict for the two of them? Does the relationship between Jakob and Lizzie change during the course of the novel? Give examples.
4. When Jakob and Lizzie return to the apartment in chapter 6, Lizzie finds Willa’s calendar diary under a loose floorboard. Think about your classroom or where you live. If you had to hide something important, what would you hide? Where might you stash your valuables?
5. In chapter 8, Lizzie and Jakob are boarding the train out of London. “I watch as they emerge, ghostlike, from the shadows, clutching gas masks and items most dear to them. Items they want to save from the Germans. A porcelain teapot. Leather-bound photo albums. A large brass menorah.” The reader infers that these items carry special significance. If you had to leave your home, what would you choose to bring?
6. The workers at Bletchley Park are assigned specialized tasks that keep the park compartmentalized. Why would government officials adopt this type of organization?
7. Jakob and Lizzie both sign the Official Secrets Act. Even though they are siblings, there are things they can’t share with each other. How do you feel when people are keeping secrets from you? What do you do about it? How do you stay friends? Would you sign the Official Secrets Act?
8. In chapter 9, Jakob introduces his sister to the guard, Reg Ribchester. This is the first of several unpleasant interactions between the two young men. How does Jakob and Reg’s relationship change over the course of the story?
9. In chapter 24, there is a strained interaction between Jarvis and Jakob when Jarvis says, “You’re a Jew, Novis, aren’t you?” How does Jakob respond? Can you identify other instances where Jakob had to confront anti-semitism?
10. In chapter 26, we learn that Jakob is a member of the Local Defense Volunteers. After his training session, several people make comments criticizing its members. For example, Mr. Berrycloth says of Jakob, “Busy playing games, he is. While the real men are off fighting Hitler.” How does Jakob respond? Why doesn’t he stand up for himself? Why do you think community members make fun of this group?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED...

11. In chapter 27, when Lizzie is left alone, she takes the opportunity to look around Jakob's room, noting, "My finds were not illuminating. Tattered spy novels, texts on information theory and binary multipliers, and an old Polish-English dictionary. At this point, the most I can accuse my brother of is being incredibly dull." Examine the contents of your locker (or backpack or bedroom). Catalog the items you find and then look at your list. What would an outsider infer about you? Is there anything you would need to add or eliminate in order for your possessions to reflect who you hope to be?
12. In chapter 68, Jakob is surprised to learn that his father was "a remarkably gifted linguist" whose code-breaking work helped the Allies win World War I. Jakob responds, "What else have I never suspected?" Think of the adults in your life. What do you know about them? How can you find out more?
13. The smoking scarecrow: Who is he? What makes him mysterious? To whom does he report?
14. In chapter 88, when bombs rain down on London, Jakob and Lizzie take refuge in a shelter. As Lizzie observes, "An explosion detonates nearby, shaking the basement. A baby cries. Mortar crumbles from the bricks and a hushed group of voices begin a chorus of 'God Save the King.'" If put in a similar situation today, what would people sing to keep their spirits up?
15. Gran is a woman we never meet. Instead, we learn about her from Jakob's and Lizzie's memories, as well as from Viola, Fleetwood, and Olivia. What are the common characteristics of Gran? What is she like? What does she enjoy? How might she spend her days?
16. In times of difficulty, many families have to make decisions that may upset their children, such as a move or a change in daily activities. Think about the adults in the story: Willa, Gran, the Colonel, Mrs. Tilbury. What decisions do they have to make? What might they be thinking about?
17. In chapter 90, Jakob notes, "If Hilter was hoping to break our spirit, to sow panic and despair, he must be sadly disappointed." How do Londoners respond to the bombing? How do you imagine your neighborhood responding to a similar situation?
18. Government propaganda posters advise Londoners: "You will be told what to do when the invasion comes" and "Stay where you are." Lizzie doesn't follow these directions. Is it because she identifies as being half-American? How do you think people would respond to these instructions today?
19. In Part 3, Lizzie and Jakob discover that "goulash" is code for September 7. How did they make this connection? If you had to create a code to communicate with your family, what words might you use?
20. This book is about a brother and sister working together to solve a family mystery. *The Bletchley Riddle* is the result of the collaborative partnership between bestselling authors Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin. What other partnerships do we see in the book? What makes a great partner?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

RESEARCH PROMPT: HISTORY'S HIDDEN SECRETS

Dilly Knox tells Jakob, “That story’s not in any history book . . . Someone needs to get credit for what they did.”

The Bletchley Riddle honors several heroic figures that had nearly been forgotten by history; namely, the Polish mathematicians whose code-breaking efforts were critical to the Allies’ deciphering of Enigma messages. Authors like Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin often uncover people and events that do not appear in textbooks; by writing stories, they bring them to light and honor experiences that had previously been left in the dark.

Though *The Bletchley Riddle* is a work of fiction, many of the people, places, and events referenced in the story are real. Do your part to uncover hidden history by researching some of the following subjects:

Alan Turing	Dilly’s Fillies	Jerzy Różycki	Joseph P. Kennedy Sr.
Dilly Knox	Marian Rejewski	War bonds	Local Defense Volunteers
Gordon Welchman	Henryk Zygałski	Ration coupons	Operation Sea Lion
Winston Churchill		Franklin Roosevelt’s fireside chats	

ACTIVITY: WACKY WORDIES

The code breakers at Bletchley Park relied on perseverance, teamwork, and a variety of strategies in order to crack a seemingly unbreakable code. In chapter 45, John, Jakob, and Beryl experience a major breakthrough when they try a new theory to predict the day’s settings. (And it works!) Jakob says, “This is the moment code breakers live for. There’s nothing there, and then you find a new way to look—and there it is” (198).

Here’s a chance to look at something in a different way. Wacky Wordies are puzzles that use visual representations to convey common words and phrases. Try your hand at breaking these Wacky Wordies. It may take lots of trial and error, but don’t give up! The answer might come to you when you least expect it.

<div>PPPP</div> <div>Earth</div>	<div>My Wings</div> <div>Wind</div>	<div>3,7,9</div> <div>13,15,17</div> <div>43,49</div> <div>ENDS</div> <div>ENDS</div> <div>ENDS</div>
<div>HOACELE</div>	<div>CHUN</div> <div>CHUN</div> <div>CHUN</div> <div>CHUN</div> <div>100</div> <div>100</div> <div>100</div> <div>100</div> <div>100</div>	<div>SHOP</div>

Try writing a wacky wordy to convey:

- “We ride at dawn!”
- Off the wall
- Crossing the line
- Eyes on me

Make up your own!

ANSWER KEY
Top row, left to right: peace on earth, wind beneath my wings, odds and ends
Bottom row, left to right: ace in the hole, Fortune 500, shop online

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED...



PUZZLES AND CODES

In chapter 41, Jakob recalls teaching Lizzie about classic book codes, having told her: “Two spies agree to use a certain book. They both have identical copies. But they don’t tell anyone what book they’re using.” Jacob had written lines with words replaced by letters, and he explained to Lizzie, “Say you get this message . . . You know that each of the number groups stands for one word of the secret note. To determine code 45-12-3, turn to page 45 of the book, count down to line number 12, and count over to word 3 on the line.”

Practice deciphering book codes using *The Bletchley Riddle* as your text.

195-18-1 119-7-7 59-1-7 61-16-5
10-6-10 163-1-5 383-6-7 376-12-4

are like family.
Goodness you are clever, Friends
Answers:

DOWNLOAD AND SHARE THESE REPRODUCIBLE
CODE-BREAKING PUZZLES!

Daily Herald Monday, April 8, 1940 1

BLETCHLEY RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

Attacking Caesar's Shift

Welcome code-breakers. Try your hand at this one:

J LXVYDCNA FXDUM MIBNAEN CX KN
LJOUNM RWCNURPNCW RO RC LXDUM
MIBNAEN J QOVOW BCKC KXURSHKRP
CQJC RC RB QOVOW
—JUNW CDARWP

Need a tad more information? Very well. This is an example of a 2,000-year-old cipher known as the Caesar Shift. To encipher a message with the Caesar Shift, you simply shift each letter of your message down the alphabet some set number of places. For a Caesar Shift of one, A becomes B, B becomes C, and so on. For a shift of two, A becomes C, B becomes D, and so on. Say we're using a Caesar Shift of 4. You might find it quite useful to create a table with both your plain and cipher alphabets:

Caesar Shift +4	plain alphabet
A	A
B	B
C	C
D	D
E	E
F	F
G	G
H	H
I	I
J	J
K	K
L	L
M	M
N	N
O	O
P	P
Q	Q
R	R
S	S
T	T
U	U
V	V
W	W
X	X
Y	Y
Z	Z

Crack the code!

And now you're ready to crack the cipher:

ADVERTISERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Turn these words from cipher to plain text:

CIPHER TEXT plain text
XLI _____
PSRHSR _____
WGVIX _____

Got it? Well done. Now, to decipher a Caesar Shift message, you must figure out the number of places the letters have been shifted. One strategy is to check every possible solution. There are only twenty-five Caesar shifts, since a shift of twenty-six gets you back where you began.

Daily Herald Monday, April 15, 1940 2

BLETCHLEY RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

The Unbreakable Book Code

Welcome code-breakers. See what you can do with this coded message:

11-5-3 132-2-5 313-4-8
285-20-7 74-10-6

Unreadable nonsense? Not if you know how to decode it. This message was written in what's called the book code, a method of secret writing used by spies throughout history. Let's say you need to communicate with a fellow spy. You agree, in private, on a book to use. You must both have copies of the same book. Secret messages are written in three-number groups, as shown above. Each group represents one word of the message. The first number refers to a page number in your agreed-upon book. The second to a line on that page. The third to a word on that line. So to decode 11-5-3, you turn to page 11 of your book, count down to line 5, and count over to word 3 on that line. That is the first word of the message. Move to the second group and do the same, and so on, and the jumble of numbers will be transformed into words. Let's try it. Say we use this article as our "book." All the page numbers are 1. The line beginning "Welcome" is line 1. We'll ignore the sample coded message, so the line beginning "Unreadable nonsense" is line 3. Got it? You receive the following code:

1-7-1 1-10-2 1-3-6
1-3-7 1-17-2 1-8-6 1-6-3
1-11-1 1-5-2

Decode the message here:

Try it with a fellow spy (in a pinch, a student will suffice). Pick a book that you both have. Write out your coded message here:

Now exchange papers with your partner and decode their secret message. The book code may seem simple, but don't be deceived. If the identity of the book you are using remains secret, this is a perfectly unbreakable code!

ADVERTISERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Get your copy today!

NOTE FOR EDUCATORS:

For both puzzles, ask students about what they notice in the advertisements. Can they identify the people in the ads? (Here's a hint: Do a bit of research on the authors of *The Bletchley Riddle*.)

For the second puzzle, have students pay special attention to the letters on the page. Ask what they notice about certain letters on the page (some are bold). This is a method of secret communication that has been used for centuries. To read the hidden message, simply find the bold letters and read only those letters. They spell out: Where is Willa? (a key question in the plot of *The Bletchley Riddle*).

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED...

VINTAGE ADS AND PROPAGANDA POSTERS

During WWII, governments and businesses used messaging to citizens to promote and aid the war efforts. Many advertisers in the 1940s didn't have TV and internet to sell their product; they relied on radio and newspaper ads and leaned into the war messaging from the government as well.

Listen to [this](#) radio ad. And [this](#) one. And [this](#) one.



Examples of posters during WWII in Britain



An example of an advertisement for chocolate during WWII



An example of a milk advertisement during WWII

Ask readers:

- Why do you think governments created messaging (or propaganda) and ads for citizens during WWII? What are the common elements in the posters and ads?
- In the print ads, what is the ratio of text to art?
- How do these ads compare to ads today? (Have you ever SEEN a print ad?)

Extension possibilities:

- Have readers create their own poster for *The Bletchley Riddle* that they might find during WWII.
- Record a radio ad for Andrew's Liver Salts.
- Willa Novis hides a message to her children in an advertisement for Andrew's Liver Salt. Create your own print advertisement for a product of your choosing (think about something in your classroom—a water bottle, pencil, headphones) and hide a message to your teacher using pin pricks like Willa (see *The Bletchley Riddle* page 166).

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED...

MATH ACTIVITY: FUNCTION MACHINE

Mathematicians are always looking for patterns. When they see a sequence of numbers, they must figure out how the numbers are connected.

Examine the function machines below. Input the first number and puzzle out what mathematical operations need to be applied to get the next number in the sequence. Become a Bletchley-certified mathematician by mastering these function machines!

The function machines below can feature addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division.

Function Machine #1

1, 4, 13, 40, ____, ____, ____

Function Machine #2

333, 175.5, 96.75, 57.375, ____, ____, ____

Extra Credit

G, 6, 3, L, 13, 4, 9.5

Use a reverse letter number cipher (A=26, B=25, Z=1, etc.) to decode the key word "Goulash"

**Answer Key for
Function Machine Activity**
Function Machine #1:
multiply by 3, then add 1
121, 364, 1,093
Function Machine #2:
divide by 2, then add 9
Next three numbers #2:
37,6875, 27,84375, 22,921875
Extra Credit:
Multiply each number by 2 to get
12, 6, 26, 8, 19

Have readers create their own mystery pattern/rule and swap with a friend. Teachers can make an interactive bulletin board and challenge others to solve them.

MATH ACTIVITY: DITLOIDS

A ditloid is a puzzle where a familiar phrase is reduced to numbers and letters. For example, 24 h. in a d. stands for "24 hours in a day."

The best ditloids encipher common phrases or phrases that are well-known to a group of people. They must contain a number and the first letter of each word. Small words such prepositions and articles (in, on, of, the) can be included. Pay attention to clues like capitalization!

Get your pencils ready to puzzle out these ditloids. Once you've mastered the skill, try making your own.

365 d. in a y. (but 366 d. in a l.y.)

3 w. on a t.

64 s. on a c.b.

5 r. on the O.f.

76 t. l. the b.p.

Ditloid answers:
365 days in a year (but 366 days in a leap year)
3 wheels on a tricycle
64 squares on a chessboard
5 rings on the Olympic flag
76 trombones led the big parade

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED...

BLETCHLEY RECIPES

In *The Bletchley Riddle*, Mrs. Tilbury “makes magic” with rationed food items. War requires a significant amount of resources: oil to grease military machinery, food for soldiers, cloth for uniforms. Because of this, some everyday items were hard to come by. Civilians were issued “ration coupons” that allowed them to purchase small quantities of valuable commodities like sugar, meat, coffee, butter, even gasoline and shoes.



Gas ration coupon from 1945

Families had to make do with what they could get, and many became quite creative! Explore the ration recipes below from the [Navy League of Canada's 1941 "Victory Cookbook."](#) Search for more online, and try your hand at wartime baking!

Duchess Soup

- 1 qt milk
- 3 tbsp flour
- 3 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp minced onion
- few grains cayenne
- 3 tbsp grated cheese
- salt & pepper

Scald milk and onions together. Pour over flour and butter that have been thoroughly blended together. Cook well, stirring constantly. Remove from fire and add grated cheese and chopped parsley. Season to taste and serve at once.

Wartime Carrot Biscuits

- 1 tbsp margarine
- 2 tbsp sugar + a little extra
- Few drops vanilla flavoring
- 4 tbsp grated raw carrot
- 6 tbsp of plain flour
- 1/2 tsp of baking powder

Cream the fat and sugar until light and fluffy, then beat in the flavoring and carrot. Fold in flour, then form mixture into small balls. As you would with cookies, place each ball on a baking tray and flatten.

Sprinkle with sugar and bake in a brisk oven for 20 minutes.

Baked Corn and Tomatoes

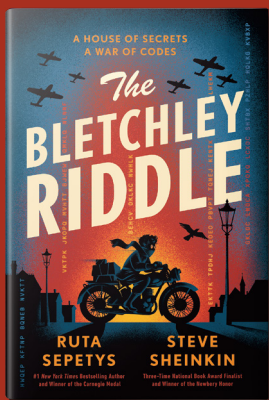
- 2 cups cooked corn, canned or fresh
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 cups tomatoes
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 cup breadcrumbs

Mix and place in a buttered baking dish. Cover with crumbs. Dot with butter and bake at 350 F for half an hour.

Hot Cheese Salad

Make a thick white sauce with butter, flour, milk, salt and pepper, and grated cheese. Then add crab meat and sliced hard-boiled eggs and serve on lettuce leaves.





ALL-SCHOOL/ COMMUNITY READS

The Bletchley Riddle is a high-interest read with an accessible reading level, making this a great book to share as an all-school or community read. Here are some tips and ideas to get you started:

1. **THEMES:** *The Bletchley Riddle* covers a variety of themes that make it a perfect fit for any school- or community-wide read, including:

Family Relationships

Friendship

Secrecy

Honor

Overcoming Challenges

Hidden Heroes

Coming-of-Age

Character Education

And More!

2. All participants must have completed the book ahead of time. Readers can read the book independently, teachers can use it as a read-aloud experience, or community members can schedule a set time period to read the book together.
3. Publicize the culminating event to incentivize students/patrons/community members.
4. Use some of the activities in this guide to help enhance the experience before, during, and after reading.
HINT: The posters and ads are a great way to engage readers during and after the read and help promote the reading experience.
5. Consider inviting the authors to speak. You can reach out to PYRAuthorVisits@penguinrandomhouse.com for more info.
6. For an example of *The Bletchley Riddle* being used as an [all-school](#) read, check out this blog from the writers of this guide.

