Spy School



By
Stuart Gibbs

A Novel Study
by Nat & Joel Reed

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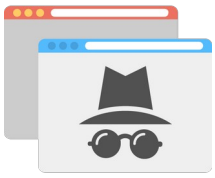


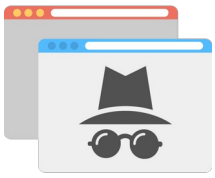
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About the Author: Nat Reed, a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years, served as a full-time instructor at Trent University's Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, please visit reednovelstudies.com.

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Suggestions and Expectations

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two or three chapters of ***Spy School*** and is comprised of four distinct sections:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature*, *Grade 5*, makes reference to:

a) determining the meaning of words and phrases... including figurative language;
b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
c) compare and contrast two characters;
d) determine how characters … respond to challenges;
e) drawing inferences from the text;
f) determining a theme of a story... **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include: coming of age, appearance versus reality, importance of teamwork, the role of deception in society, self image and personal growth.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *personification*
4. Identify *similes*
5. Identify *anagrams*
6. Listing compound words
7. Identifying parts of speech
8. Identify *syllables*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Five W's and an H Chart
3. Create a synopsis
4. Identify the climax of the novel

Character Activities

1. Compare characters
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experience

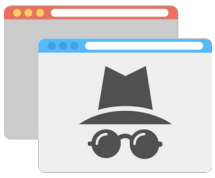
Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Create a poem
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Create a journal entry
8. Opinion writing

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a movie poster
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

Can an undercover nerd become a superstar agent? In the first book in the bestselling Spy School series, Ben Ripley sure hopes so—and his life may depend on it!

Ben Ripley may only be in middle school, but he's already pegged his dream job: CIA or bust. Unfortunately for him, his personality doesn't exactly scream "secret agent." In fact, Ben is so awkward, he can barely get to school and back without a mishap. Because of his innate nerdiness, Ben is not surprised when he is recruited for a school with a focus on science—but he's entirely shocked to discover that the school is actually a front for a junior CIA academy. Could the CIA really want him? (Courtesy of the Publisher)

Author Biography
Stuart Gibbs



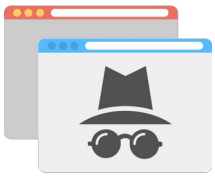
Stuart Gibbs is an American author and screenwriter known for his bestselling middle-grade series that blend mystery, humor, and adventure. Born on June 11, 1969, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he moved to San Antonio, Texas, where he completed high school. Gibbs earned a Bachelor of Arts in biology from the University of Pennsylvania.

Before turning to fiction, Gibbs worked in film and television, writing screenplays for movies like *Showdown* (1993), *See Spot Run* (2001), and *Repli-Kate* (2002). He also contributed to animated projects including *Anastasia* and *Open Season 3*.

Gibbs debuted as a novelist with *Belly Up* in 2010, launching the *FunJungle* series. He followed with the *Spy School* series, beginning in 2012, featuring a young protagonist navigating a CIA training academy. His other series include *Moon Base Alpha*, *Charlie Thorne*, *The Last Musketeer*, and *Once Upon a Tim*. His books have been translated into multiple languages and have appeared on the New York Times bestseller list. (Courtesy of the Publisher)

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-3



Before you read this section:

It is important for an author to create an interesting **protagonist** (main character) for any work of fiction. *Spy School* features 12-year-old Ben Ripley, who is unexpectedly recruited into a secret CIA academy for promising young spies. Think back on some of the most interesting main characters you have met in previous stories you've read. What do think makes for an intriguing character that really keeps your attention?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

debonair	intrigued	dowdy	inauspicious	prestigious
sarcasm	circumvented	adrenaline	exacerbated	deplorable

1. The voice was inflected with _____ rather than aggression.
2. The hobo was _____ in appearance and smelled rather badly.
3. The twitch in his eye seemed to be _____ by his anger.
4. He seemed to be about fifty – but was still suave and _____.
5. I thought his half-hearted effort was absolutely _____.
6. We arrived at Mae's house when she was making supper – a most _____ time.
7. Weren't you the tiniest bit _____ when she said she was a spy?
8. Had we _____ the enemy or were they only waiting in ambush?
9. Yale University is a most _____ institution.
10. I'd never run with a full-on, life or death _____ surge before.

Questions 

1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. What was there about Alexander Hale that impressed Ben?

3. What did you find most surprising about Alexander's visit?

4. Describe how the first chapter concludes with a **cliffhanger**. Why could this passage be described as a cliffhanger?

5. Give one example of **sarcasm** from the first three chapters.

6. Describe Mike's reaction to the news that Ben was attending a science academy.

7. Did you suspect that what Ben went through when arriving at the Academy was a test? Why or why not?

8. What did you find to be the most interesting or exciting event in these chapters?

9. Why did Ben find it surprising when he was told that he had an extraordinary aptitude for cryptography?

Language Activities

A. **Nathan Hale** was a patriot at the time of America's War of Independence against England in the 1700s. He was only 21 years old when he was hanged by the British for being a spy. His famous last words were, *"I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country"*. The academy's Administration Building is named after him and we also find his name cropping up several times in the novel. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three interesting facts about this fascinating person.



1	
2	
3	

B. A **simile** is a comparison using the words "like" or "as". We find an example of a simile in this section: *He pulled my dusty old tennis racket from the back of the closet and swung it like a sword*. What is being compared in this example?

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following item(s) with something from your own imagination:

a) an old army rifle

b) When you come across another example of a simile in this novel, come back to this activity and record it below.

C. Anagrams



An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:

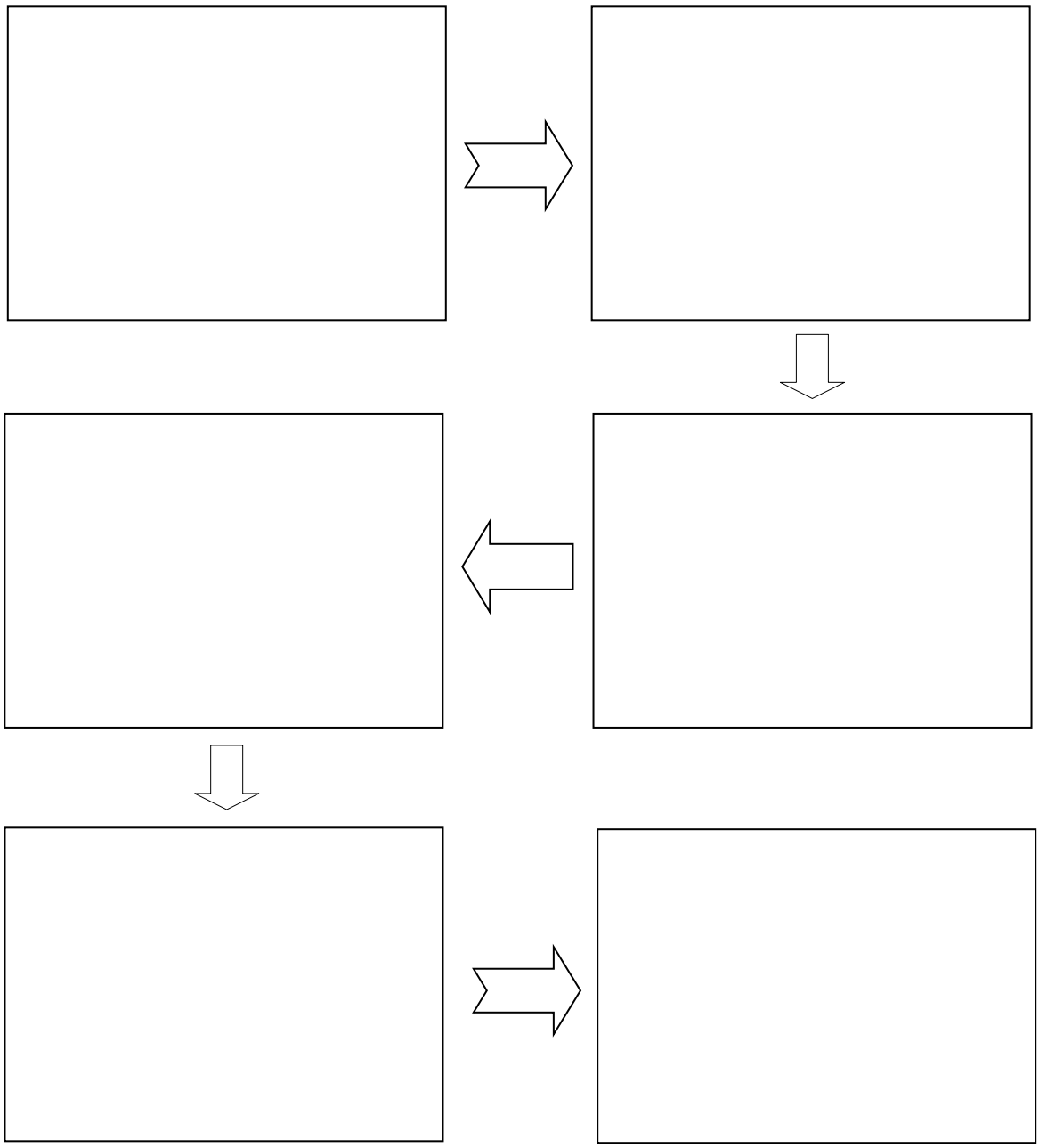
a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in this section of ***Spy School.***

Word	Anagram	Clue
tried		Weary.
smile		Green fruits.
seals		A homophone of *sails*.
secret		Builds.
times		Things.
steak		Acquires.

D. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this section. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



Extension Activity

A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words



Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of this section.

Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: