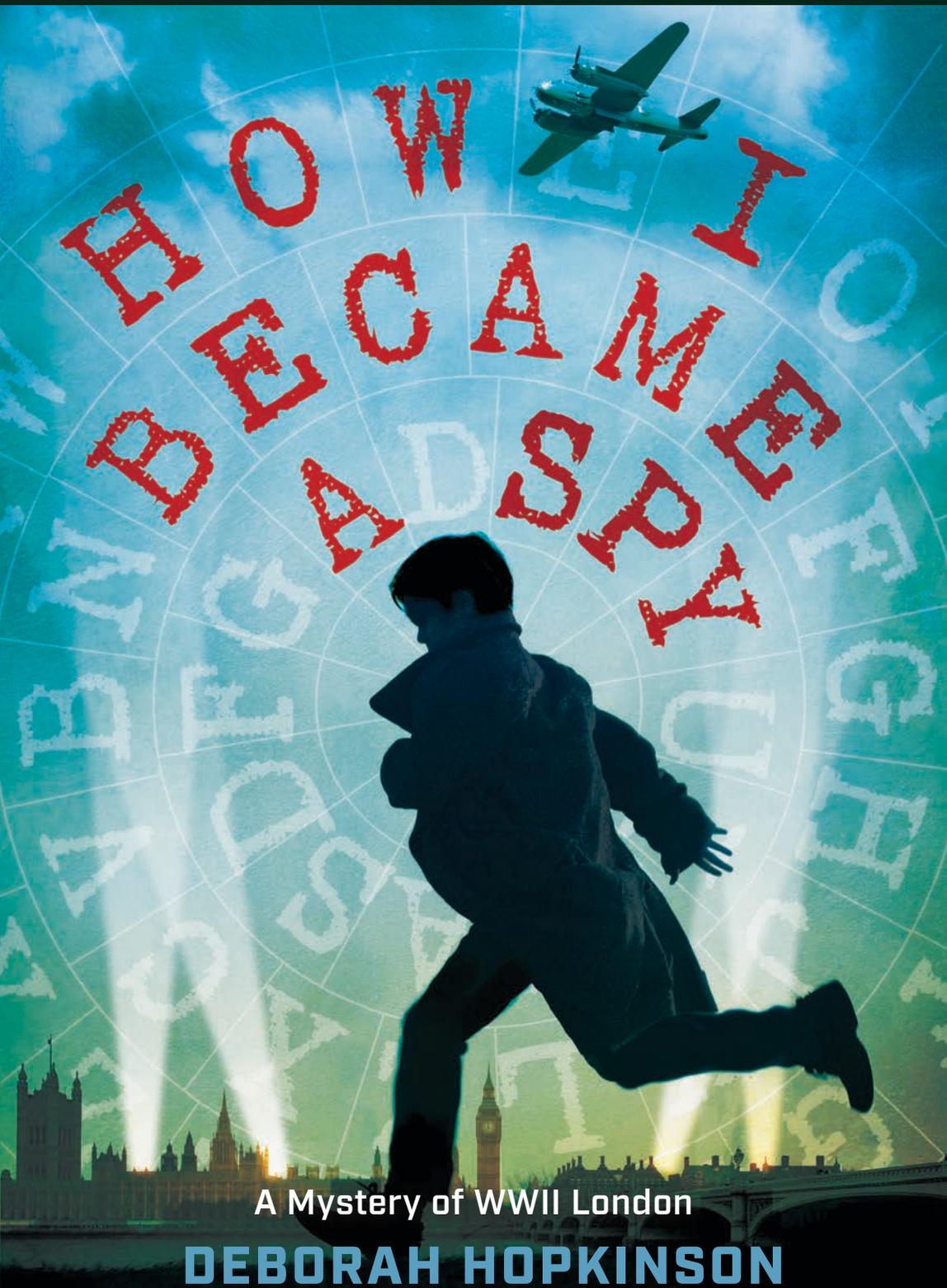


EDUCATORS' GUIDE



A Mystery of WWII London

DEBORAH HOPKINSON



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DEBORAH HOPKINSON has written more than forty books for young readers. She is the author of the middle-grade novels *The Great Trouble: A Mystery of London*, *the Blue Death*, and *a Boy Called Eel*; *A Bandit's Tale: The Muddled Misadventures of a Pickpocket*; and *Into the Firestorm: A Novel of San Francisco, 1906*. Her picture books include *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*; *Sky Boys: How They Built the Empire State Building*, an ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Book and a *Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book*; *Abe Lincoln Crosses a Creek*, an ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Book and a Junior Library Guild Selection; *A Boy Called Dickens*; and the ALA

Notable Book *Apples to Oregon*. Visit her at DeborahHopkinson.com and follow her on Twitter at [@deborahhopkinson](https://twitter.com/deborahhopkinson).

INTERNET RESOURCES

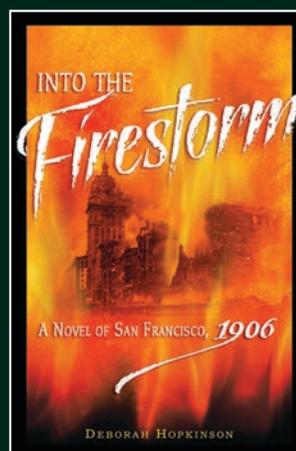
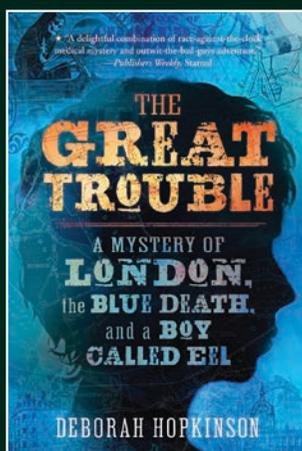
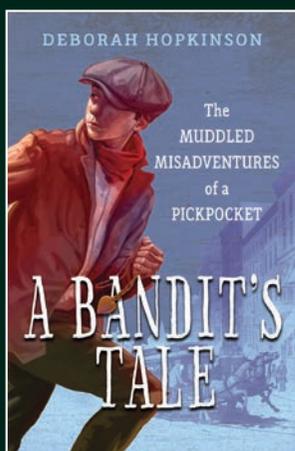
bbc.co.uk/history/topics/civil_defence_ww2

This site discusses the role of civil defense organizations in London during World War II.

history.com/topics/us-presidents/dwight-d-eisenhower

This site provides a biography of Dwight D. Eisenhower.

ALSO BY DEBORAH HOPKINSON



RHTeachersLibrarians.com

[@RHCEducators](https://twitter.com/RHCEducators)



Prepared by Pat Scales, Children's Literature Consultant, Greenville, S.C.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Describe Bertie. Why does his dad allow him to be a civil defense volunteer? What does Bertie learn in volunteer training? Explain why his dad and Warden Hawk have to remind him of his duties.
2. What is the first hint that there is conflict within Bertie's family? Explain why Bertie doesn't like talking about it. How does Warden Ita help Bertie deal with his family issues? Describe his family at the end of the novel.
3. Explain the following quote from "A Scandal in Bohemia" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: "You see, but you do not observe." (p. 5) What is the difference between seeing and observing? What does one learn from observing that can't be learned from seeing? At what point do Bertie and David become observers?
4. Bertie says, "Learning to be a spy isn't easy. You have to think about each and every detail." (p. 56) What details does Bertie have to ponder? How do his spying skills gain him recognition from his father? What details is he likely to share with Will?
5. Discuss Bertie's attitude toward Americans in London. How does his view change as the story progresses? What does Eleanor have to do with his shift in attitude?
6. Describe Bertie's friendship with David. Explain how David's story makes Bertie miss his mum. At what point does Eleanor become part of the team? What do the three have in common? How are they different?
7. Trust is one of the underlying themes in the novel. What makes Eleanor trust Bertie? How does Violette Romy trust Eleanor? Bertie struggles with trust. At what point does he learn to trust himself?
8. Bertie finds a notebook lying in the street. How does he know the notebook is important? Explain how the notebook makes him suspicious of those around him. Why is Eleanor upset when she learns that Bertie has read a portion of the journal? Why does Bertie think that Violette is a secret agent?
9. Explain the following simile: "I was thinking about how the war was so big, like a giant wave crashing on a beach. And how we were all like tiny grains of sand, being tumbled around or swept away." (p. 126) How does this apply to Bertie, David, and Eleanor? Discuss what Bertie means by "Violette had decided to dive into the path of the wave."
10. What is the meaning of *tyranny*? Mr. Turner, the history teacher, believes that a war against tyranny requires a special responsibility. How do Bertie, David, and Eleanor realize this responsibility after they decode the notebook?
11. What has the world learned from World War II? Debate whether our nation's role in the war has influenced our present.

12. Discuss the significance of the Sherlock Holmes quotes at the beginning of some of the chapters. Explain what David means when he says, “I feel like Sherlock is about to reveal the solution to a case.” (p. 222) What do Bertie, David, and Eleanor learn from Sherlock Holmes when it comes to solving their own mystery?

13. *The SOE Manual* provides guidelines for agents. Hopkinson quotes from this manual throughout the novel. How are the guidelines essential for effective spying? Debate whether Bertie, David, and Eleanor follow these guidelines as they solve the mystery.

What is Dr. Shea’s role in the war? Why is he in London? Explain his connection to Violetta and Leo Marks. Why does he call Bertie, David, and Eleanor the Baker Street Irregulars?

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-7.1, 4-7.3; Craft & Structure RL. 4-7.4, 4-7.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 4-7.1, 4-7.3; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-7.5.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Bertie refers to the various types of air raid shelters used in London during World War II. Read about the Anderson and Morrison shelters commonly used in homes (thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/shelter-at-home-in-the-second-world-war). Write and illustrate a brochure that informs families about these types of shelters.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-7.7; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

Depending on resources and space available to you, have students use the dimensions provided in the article to construct either to-scale or scaled-down air raid shelters. Encourage them to think or write about what it must have been like to be forced into these cramped spaces for unknown periods of time.

Correlates to Common Core State Standards in Math Content.4 MD.A.3.

Have students read about the Battle of Normandy (worldwar2facts.org/battle-of-normandy.html). Then have them write a front-page story for the *New York Times* or the *Times of London* about D-Day. Remember to include who, what, when, where, how, and why.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-7.7; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.



Take note of Operation Overlord casualties (historyonthenet.com/d-day-casualties). Instruct students to construct a graph (bar, line, or pie) that compares the numbers of soldiers killed, wounded, missing and captured from each country.

 **Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Science & Technical Subjects: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RST. 6-8.7.**

Read about the symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) on the following website: nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml. Do you think Bertie or any of the other characters are showing symptoms of PTSD? Cite scenes and direct quotes from the novel to support your analysis.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Reading: Informational Text RI. 4-7.1, RI, 4-7.2; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1.

Write an essay that explains why Operation Overlord was the “beginning of the end of the war.”

 **Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.**

Bertie, David, and Eleanor learn how to crack the codes that Violette used in her notebook. Once students have looked over the codes in the back of the book, have them write notes to each other using either one of these or one of their own invention. What makes a code hard or easy to decipher?

 **Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Science & Technical Subjects: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RST. 6-8.3.**

VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

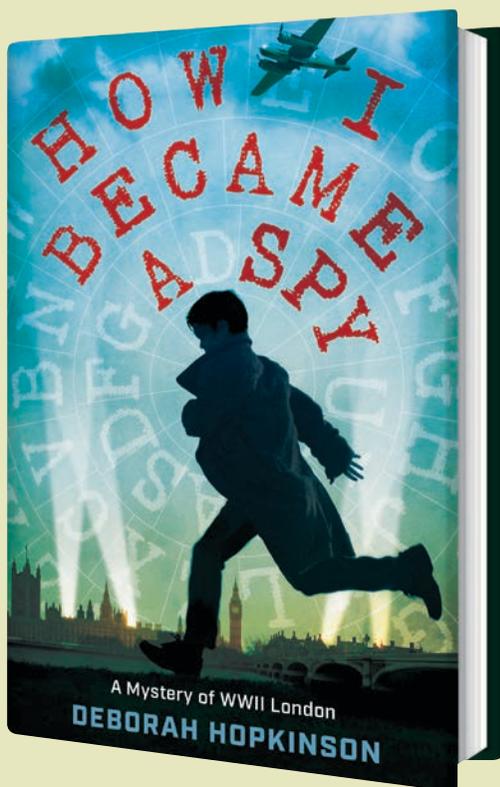
Ask students to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them, taking clues from context. Such words may include: *diligent* (p. 15), *interrogation* (p. 18), *sabotage* (p. 33), *resistance* (p. 33), *culprit* (p. 40), *conspicuous* (p. 42), *shrapnel* (p. 48), *conjectures* (p. 53), *quarry* (p. 55), *evading* (p. 63), *tyranny* (p. 109), *pogroms* (p. 122), *infiltrated* (p. 133), *dissipating* (p. 136), *deduce* (p. 139), *encrypted* (p. 139), *transcriptions* (p. 157), *impersonating* (p. 163), *complicit* (p. 165), *compromised* (p. 167), *insidious* (p. 169), *collaborator* (p. 229), and *tactical* (p. 242).

Look up each unfamiliar word in the dictionary. Which words are the language of war? Which are related to spying?

 **Correlates to Common Core State Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-7.4.**

ABOUT THE BOOK

Readers meet twelve-year-old Bertie Bradshaw, who is on duty as a civil defense volunteer in London during World War II when he spots a notebook lying in the street. Bertie is convinced the journal belongs to a spy because much of it is written in code. Then he meets Eleanor, an American girl, who says the notebook belongs to Violette Romy, her French tutor. The problem is that Violette is missing, and someone else appears to be after the journal. David, a Jewish refugee, joins the team, and the three manage to decipher the notebook and uncover a security leak just in time to save D-Day, the Allied Invasions of Normandy.



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PRE-READING DISCUSSION

Have students read the Historical Background section of the Author’s Note (p. 253–254). Discuss why the Invasion of Normandy was “one of the most crucial secrets of World War II.” Have students write a paper that explains the importance of this secret operation.

- Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-72; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-77; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-71, 4-72; Knowledge of Language L. 4-73.

There must be a problem and a solution in a mystery novel. Consider the title of the novel, and write a one-page paper that suggests the problem and solution.

- Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-71; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-71, 4-72; Knowledge of Language L. 4-73.