

Educator Discussion Guide

The Double Cross: (And Other Skills I Learned As a Superspy)

By Jackson Pearce

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2018
Grade 3-5

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Hale is not your typical 12-year-old kid. He's a spy! That's right, a spy. He's also what some might call...chunky. Hale is often made fun of by kids in spy school because he is the last person to make it across the finish line for the class's weekly run. Despite this "minor" set-back, Hale's weight does not prevent him from developing major assets like disabling explosives or speaking eleven different languages. Hale comes from a long line of spies. His parents work for the super-secret Sub Rosa Society and they make a great spy team. However, there's one big problem. While out on a top secret spy mission, Hale's mom and dad have both gone missing! Hale has to think of something quick! Hale will have to use all the spy skills he has learned to find and rescue his parents. In a world full of danger, secrets, and villains it won't be easy!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jackson Pearce is a female writer whose works are geared toward upper elementary and middle school students. While attending the University of Georgia Jackson Pearce majored in English. Books that she has written center around fairytales, magical creatures, spy stories.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<http://jackson-pearce.com/>.

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OTHER TITLES IN SERIES

The Inside Job: And Other Skills I Learned As A Super Spy, 2016

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Making Predictions

Display a copy of the book *The Double Cross: (And Other Skills I Learned As A Superspy)*. Provide students with a clear view of the book's cover and ask them to predict what they think the story will be about. The students can write their prediction in their notebooks. They can share their

predictions with the class and later compare their predictions with the actual events in the story once it is read.

Activation Background Knowledge

Write three of the most descriptive words from the book's title on the board. These words would be (1) Double Crossed, (2) Superspy, and (3) Skills. Have the students give their thoughts on what they think it means to be double crossed, what it means to be a superspy, and what it means to have skills. Students can write the meanings of each of the words and later check them for accuracy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Use the events in chapter one of the book to explain why Agent Otter was beside himself after the race to the dining hall.
2. Hale's parents are known as "The Team." What information from the text can lead readers to believe that they have earned the title "The Team."
3. Hale overheard his parents' conversation the night before their disappearance. What information did he hear and how do you think this will impact the story?
4. Hale knows it will not be easy to convince Ms. Elma to leave the family's apartment. How was Hale able to accomplish this task?
5. Hale took a number of steps in preparation for entering the League. How did Hale demonstrate his resourcefulness before initially entering the league building?
6. Hale discovered some surprising information on page 264 in which he makes the statement "How could I have missed this?" To what is Hale referring? If you were Hale, what would you have done after learning this information?
7. Hale's sister, Kennedy, was someone he could count on. Hale recited the plan to his sister more than once. What role did Kennedy play in Hale's ability to breach the HITS computer?
8. On page 213 Dr. Fishburn stated "Perhaps our physical requirements need to be reevaluated." What did he mean by this statement and why did he make it? Is there anyone in objection to Dr. Fishburn's thoughts? Who is this person and why does this person feel this way?
9. At the end of chapter twenty, after their first mission together, Hale and Walter have a serious conversation. What does Walter reveal about his prior treatment of Hale? How does Hale feel after this conversation? Would you have felt the same and why?
10. Hale recalls the phrase, "Real heroes don't always look like heroes and villains don't always look like villains," Explain what this phrase means as it relates to the story.
11. In chapter 27 Hale makes an interesting discovery about Alex Creevy. Describe how you think he felt at the moment of this discovery. How would you have felt?
12. Who became an unlikely source of support in Hale's escape from Creevy?
13. How were Hale's parents able to eventually communicate with him and what coded message did they send him?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Writing:

- After students have read the book, have them write a different ending to the story. Each student can present their alternate ending to the class.
- Have students create their own spy story. Place student into groups of three or four. Each group will have a leader, presenter, and recorder(s). Students will determine a setting for

the story and include several characters. The story must contain a clear problem and resolution to that problem.

- Group Leader: This person will assign the roles of choosing the recorder and presenter. This person will also be responsible for keeping the group on track.
- Recorder: This person will write or type the details of the story. Groups of four may have more than one recorder.
- Presenter: This person will give a verbal delivery of the story to the class.

Social Studies:

- Have students conduct research on famous American spies and their missions. Students can include background information on the person they chose, if their missions were ever compromised, and what ultimately happened to them.
- Introduce your students to the concept of ciphers. Give students worksheets with different examples of ciphers, including substitution texts, Baconian ciphers, Morse Code, number letters, etc. Question students about what they think the odd example sentences on the paper are. See if the students can crack the codes. Work through some of the examples with students, but allow time for students to decipher once they catch on to the game. Discuss with students why people would want to make codes that others cannot understand and the historical use of ciphers by spies. Here is some additional information on spies and ciphers, <http://www.topspysecrets.com/codes-and-ciphers.html>.

Science:

Explore the website <https://www.savvyhomemade.com/homemade-spy-gear/> and give students the opportunity to research and build their very own spy equipment from simple household items. Items on the site include the option to build your own periscope, create and use invisible ink, or to create their own cipher wheel to code and decode a secret message.

Technology:

Students can practice their spy skills while interacting with these I Spy computer activities. Students will be challenged by puzzles and riddles as they sharpen their ability to solve the next problem that comes their way. <http://www.scholastic.com/ispy/games/index.htm>

Math:

Use graph paper to design your own spy headquarters. The spy headquarters should contain between 5 to 10 rooms. Find the area and perimeter of each room within your headquarters. Show your work for each problem that is solved.

Vocabulary:

Antidote	Haphazardly	Schematics
Assassins	Imploding	Prosthetic
Coaxing	Indignation	Retaliate
Diversion	Interrogation	Rogue
Encrypted	Meticulously	Transcripts
Exasperated	Operative	Verge
Fervently	Pandemonium	

RELATED WEBSITES

Wiki How

<http://www.wikihow.com/Be-a-Spy-Kid>

This site provides information to kids so that they learn the skills and techniques to becoming the next superspy.

Top Spy Secrets

<http://www.topspysecrets.com/>

Kids can learn spy secrets on this website. They will have access to missions, training assignments, and cartoon adventures.

American History for Kids

<http://www.americanhistoryforkids.com/spies/>

This site provides historical information Nathan Hale, and American spy.

History

<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/5-patriot-spies-of-the-american-revolution>

This website gives students information and pictures on spies that were active during the American Revolution.