

## Secret agents

### Topic

Spies and spying

### Learning outcomes

- Use vocabulary related to spies and spying
- Read and understand details in a text about MI6
- Explain the skills needed to be a spy
- Participate in a role play of an interview with a spy

### Age and level

13-17, Adults (B1)

### Time

60 – 80 minutes

### Materials

- Presentation OR
- Student worksheet

### Introduction

This lesson offers a variety of activities related to the topic of spies and spying. To start the lesson, students brainstorm vocabulary related to the topic. They read a text about MI6, the British Secret Intelligence Service, and match headings to paragraphs. They then correct false information to check their comprehension of the text. Students can carry out an optional discussion activity before moving onto a role play in which they play the roles of interviewer and interviewee. During the role play, students

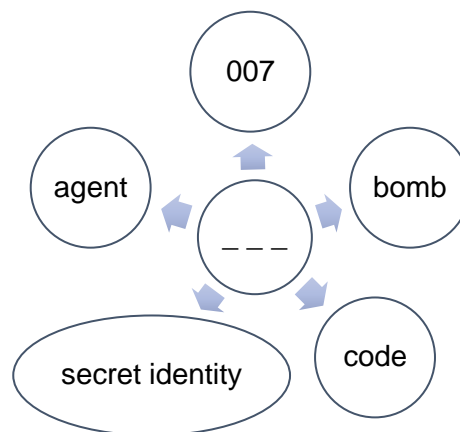
think about the skills and qualities needed to work as a spy. Students can end the lesson by trying to crack and write secret codes.

You can choose to use either a presentation or a student worksheet for this lesson.

## Procedure

**Lead-in:  
Mind map  
(10 mins)**

- Show **slide 2** or draw this mind map on the board:



- Ask students to look at the words in the mind map and to guess the three-letter word in the middle (spy).
- Check that everyone understands the words in the mind map, then ask them to add more words related to spies and spying. Students can do this as a whole class or in groups. Ask students for some examples of words and write them on the board / add them to the mind map.
- You may like to feed in some vocabulary from the text e.g. James Bond, MI6, security, intelligence, agency.

**Task 1:  
Reading for  
gist  
(10 mins)**

- Show **slide 3** of the presentation or refer students to **Task 1** of the student worksheet.
- Explain that students are going to read a text about MI6, the UK's Secret Intelligence Service. As they read the text, they should write the headings (a-f) in the correct places in the text (1-6), or note heading letters and gap numbers.
- Give students 4 minutes to read and match. If you are using the presentation, give students 2-3 minutes to look at slide 3 then 2-3 minutes to look at **slide 4**.
- Allow them to compare answers in pairs before checking them with the class.

	<p><b>Answers:</b> 1e What is MI6?, 2a How old is MI6?, 3f Where is MI6?, 4b MI6 agents, 5d Secret messages, 6c MI6 online</p>
<p><b>Task 2:</b>  <b>Reading for more details</b>  <b>(10 mins)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show <b>slide 5</b> of the presentation or refer student to <b>Task 2</b> in the student worksheet.</li> <li>• Tell students that sentences 1-5 all contain some incorrect information. Ask them to try to correct the information individually or in pairs.</li> <li>• Students then read the text again to check their answers. Check the answers as a class.</li> <li>• Fast finishers can work in pairs to write two more sentences with incorrect information.</li> </ul> <p><b>Answers:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Secret Intelligence Service is MI6's real name.</li> <li>2. The British government officially recognised MI6 in 1995.</li> <li>3. The first chief of MI6 signed documents with a 'C' in green ink.</li> <li>4. MI6 sent coded messages to agents during the Second World War.</li> <li>5. Anyone can access the MI6 website.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Task 3:</b>  <b>Discussion</b>  <b>(optional)</b>  <b>(10 mins)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show <b>slide 6</b> of the presentation or refer students to <b>Task 3</b> in the student worksheet.</li> <li>• Put students into small groups and tell them to discuss the questions. Invite some groups to share their thoughts with the class.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Role play</b>  <b>(20-30 mins)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students to imagine that they are going to interview a person who'd like to be a spy. Brainstorm some questions they would ask. You could do this as a whole class, or students could work in pairs or groups to think about questions first.</li> <li>• Choose the best questions and write them on the board. The number / type of questions depends on the time you have available and age / level of your learners. Examples include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why do you want to be a spy?</li> <li>○ What experience / skills do you have that would be useful as a spy?</li> <li>○ What experience do you have in collecting intelligence?</li> <li>○ What qualities are important for a spy to have? Do you have these qualities?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Can you describe a time when you had to quickly adapt to a new situation?
- What do you think some of the ethical challenges might be?
- How do you build trust with people you don't know well?
- What would you do if you had to work in a country where you don't speak the language?
- How do you stay calm under pressure / in stressful situations?
- What would you do if you noticed somebody following you?
- Once you have chosen some questions, give students a time limit to prepare answers to the questions. They can be truthful, or they can invent answers.
- If students need support, you can brainstorm some example answers with the class, or put students together to share ideas. Walk around the room and help if necessary.
- Put students into pairs (make sure that students who prepared answers together are not working as a pair). In pairs, students take turns to interview each other.
- After the interviews, ask some pairs to report back on the interviews e.g. which questions were difficult to answer; which answers were good / funny etc.

**Task 4:**  
**Secret codes**  
**(10 mins)**

- If you have time, finish off the lesson with a fun activity. Show **slide 7** of the presentation or refer students to **Task 4** of the student worksheet.
- Put students into pairs and ask them to try to work out what the messages mean. Walk around and offer help as needed.
- Show **slide 8** or give answers as soon as the students have finished or start to get frustrated.
- Have the pairs use one of the codes to make another secret message. Demonstrate this on the board first if necessary.
- Pairs can then swap messages with a different pair and try to decode the new message.
- Alternatively, they could write their code on a sticky note then stick it on the board for others to read and decode. You may need to remind students that they can only use language that is suitable for the classroom!

**Answers:**

*1 THE FIRST LETTER OF EACH WORD IS WRONG. A random letter replaces the first letter of each word.*

2 THIS MESSAGE LOOKS VERY STRANGE. All the vowels are removed.

3 WRITING BACKWARDS IS DIFFICULT. This is written backwards.

4 WHAT IS YOUR NAME? Use the grid below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

**Adapted from a lesson contributed by**

Sally Trowbridge