
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE SPY WHO SENT MESSAGES IN SOCKS

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage
- ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key
- ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

Reading they'll actually do.

TERMS OF USE

Thank you for your purchase! By purchasing this resource, you agree to the following terms:

- **FOR YOUR CLASSROOM:** You may use this resource with your own students, print copies for your classroom, and save to your personal computer.
- **PLEASE DO NOT:** Share this resource with other teachers (please direct them to purchase their own copy), post this resource online where it can be publicly accessed, or claim this resource as your own.
- **NEED MULTIPLE COPIES?** Additional licenses are available at a discount. Please contact us or check our store for site license options.

CREDITS & COPYRIGHT

© Not Boring Media. All rights reserved. This resource was created for single-classroom use only.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

THE SPY WHO SENT MESSAGES IN SOCKS

During the darkest years of World War II, a Polish woman named Maria Krystyna Janina Skarbek became one of Britain's most successful and daring spies. Known by her British cover name Christine Granville, she smuggled vital intelligence across enemy lines using remarkable methods—including hiding strips of microfilm containing military secrets in specially sewn compartments inside her stockings.

Skarbek was among the very first women recruited by Britain's Special Operations Executive, the secret organization responsible for coordinating espionage, sabotage, and resistance activities throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. She volunteered for missions that many considered suicide assignments. She crossed the treacherous Carpathian Mountains on skis multiple times to gather intelligence from occupied Poland. She talked her way out of Gestapo custody by pretending to have tuberculosis and coughing blood (actually bitten from her own tongue). She once freed three captured British agents by walking directly into a Nazi prison, claiming to be a relative, and bluffing the guards into releasing them.

Her sock-smuggling technique was elegantly simple but remarkably effective. She would hide tiny rolls of microfilm containing photographs of German military positions, troop movements, and strategic information in carefully sewn compartments hidden inside her stockings. Nazi guards conducting searches rarely examined women's undergarments closely enough to discover the hidden compartments, especially on a woman who appeared as confident and innocent as Skarbek.

Skarbek survived dozens of incredibly dangerous missions throughout the war. She parachuted into occupied France to help coordinate resistance fighters preparing for the D-Day invasion. She bribed, charmed, and threatened her way past countless Nazi checkpoints. Her handlers at British intelligence headquarters considered her almost supernaturally lucky, though her survival owed more to courage, quick thinking, and remarkable composure under pressure.

After the war ended, Britain largely forgot its wartime spies, especially the women. Skarbek received limited official recognition and struggled financially in peacetime. In 1952, she was murdered in a London hotel by a rejected suitor—a tragic and senseless end for someone who had survived years of Nazi-occupied Europe.

Word Count: 330 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: BBC

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

What was Christine Granville's real name?

- ☐ A) Maria Krystyna Janina Skarbek
- ☐ B) Eva Braun
- ☐ C) Anne Frank
- ☐ D) Margaret Thatcher

2

Where did she hide microfilm?

- ☐ A) In her shoes
- ☐ B) In her stockings
- ☐ C) In her hair
- ☐ D) In her buttons

3

How did she escape Gestapo custody once?

- ☐ A) She fought out
- ☐ B) She pretended to have tuberculosis
- ☐ C) She bribed them
- ☐ D) She was rescued

4

Why were socks effective hiding places?

- ☐ A) Guards couldn't see them
- ☐ B) Guards rarely searched women's undergarments thoroughly
- ☐ C) Socks are waterproof
- ☐ D) No one wears socks

5

What happened to Skarbek after the war?

- ☐ A) She became famous
- ☐ B) She was largely forgotten and struggled financially
- ☐ C) She became a movie star
- ☐ D) She continued spying

6

What does this reveal about how heroes are remembered?

- ☐ A) All heroes are remembered equally
- ☐ B) Important contributions can be overlooked, especially women's wartime service
- ☐ C) Spies always become famous
- ☐ D) Britain treats all veterans well

ANSWER KEY

The Spy Who Sent Messages in Socks

1. A) Maria Krystyna Janina Skarbek

DOK 1 — Recall.

2. B) In her stockings

DOK 1 — Recall.

3. B) She pretended to have tuberculosis

DOK 2 — Inference.

4. B) Guards rarely searched women's undergarments thoroughly

DOK 2 — Inference.

5. B) She was largely forgotten and struggled financially

DOK 3 — Analysis.

6. B) Important contributions can be overlooked, especially women's wartime service

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Spy Who Sent Messages in Socks

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- NGSS — Connections to scientific practices

PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why were women's contributions to wartime intelligence often overlooked?
- Skarbek survived the Nazis but was murdered after the war. What does this irony suggest about danger and safety?
- Should nations do more to recognize wartime spies even when secrecy is no longer necessary?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research other women spies from WWII.
- Design your own hiding place for small secret messages.
- Write a biographical presentation about Christine Granville.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

SOURCE

- BBC / Scottish SPCA investigations