

ESPIONAGE

Pathway Guide by Mark Robinson

This Pathway Guide considers the overall theme of Espionage across the centuries and is based on two Reteach lists: *Spymaster and spies in Elizabethan England* and *Female spies and secret agents in WW2: The Special Operations Executive*

Please note that all timings are suggestions only so feel free to adapt or change them according to the needs of your students and your timetable. (Times in brackets refer to classroom time.)

List 1: *Spymaster and spies in Elizabethan England*

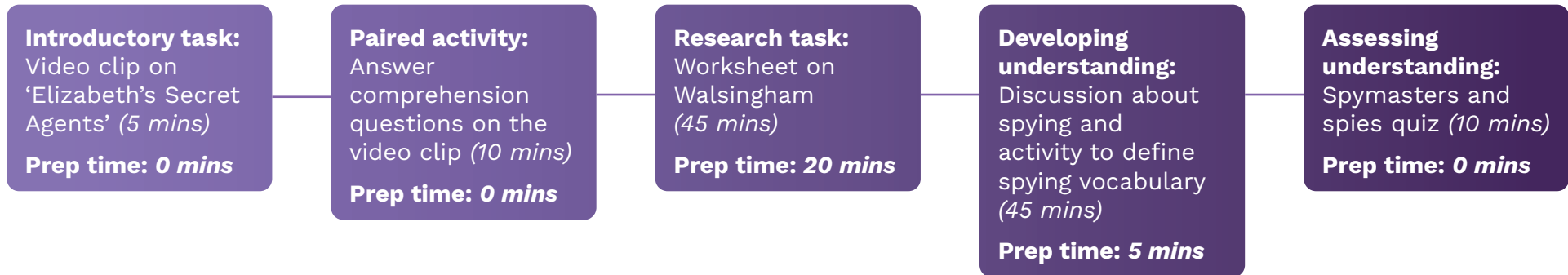
Enquiry questions

1. How were pre-war gender norms challenged and moderated during the Second World War?
2. What were the long-term effects on people who worked in the SOE, especially those who operated behind enemy lines? How do you think they adjusted to life after the war had ended?
3. How much did women contribute to Britain's war effort? Assess the importance of women's roles in the SOE.
4. To what extent did pre-war attitudes to women change after the Second World War?
5. How fully were people of colour afforded equal opportunities (for example, Noor Inayat Khan), or did they face different/additional racial challenges?

Curriculum and specification mapping

- **KS3 curriculum:** The development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509–1745
- **KS4 curriculum:** [British History from the] Early Modern (1450–1750)
- **AQA specification:** Elizabethan England, c1568–1603
- **Edexcel specification:** Early Elizabethan England, 1558–1588
- **OCR specification:** Tudor government: growth of royal power under Henry VIII; the role of Parliament under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

Not much planning time available



- **Introductory task:** Watch the two-minute BBC Two clip on *Elizabeth I's Secret Agents: The plots against Elizabeth* keep coming with your students (<https://reteach.org.uk/subject/history/spymaster-and-spies-in-elizabethan-england>). This provides an excellent context to the era and the topic.
- **Paired activity:** Help students to understand the nature of the context by completing a table based on the BBC clip:

Plotters against Elizabeth		William Cecil's protection plan	
Plot type 1		Protector 1	
Plot type 2		Protector2	
Motivation		Protector 2	
What did the plotters want to happen?		What did Cecil want to happen?	

Answers:

Plotters against Elizabeth		William Cecil's protection plan	
Plot type 1	<i>Foreign Power</i>	Protector 1	<i>Forger</i>
Plot type 2	<i>Assassination</i>	Protector2	<i>Codebreaker</i>
Motivation	<i>Catholicism</i>	Protector 2	<i>Spymaster (Walsingham)</i>
What did the plotters want to happen?		What did Cecil want to happen?	
<i>Put Mary Queen of Scots on the throne</i>		<i>Execute Mary Queen of Scots</i>	

- **Research task:** (1) Draw up a family tree showing Walsingham's connections and how he came to the notice of Elizabeth. (2) 'Think like a spymaster!': how did Walsingham lay traps to foil the Throckmorton and Babington plots? (3) What did Walsingham do to help defeat the Spanish Armada?
- **Developing understanding:** Discuss general themes of spying, espionage, duplicity, forgery, and cyphers with your class, explaining what each means and why they exist. Students can then write a definition of each word followed by an explanation of how Walsingham could use each of them in protecting Elizabeth.
- **Assessing understanding:** Download, print out and distribute the Student Quiz from the Reteach site (Teacher Quiz answers available).

Some planning time available

Introductory task: Issues of ideological conflict in the 16th century
(10 mins)

Prep time: 20 mins

Paired activity: Research Walsingham and make a timeline
(20 mins)

Prep time: 10 mins

Greater depth: Discussion of Elizabeth's role in promoting spying
(20 mins)

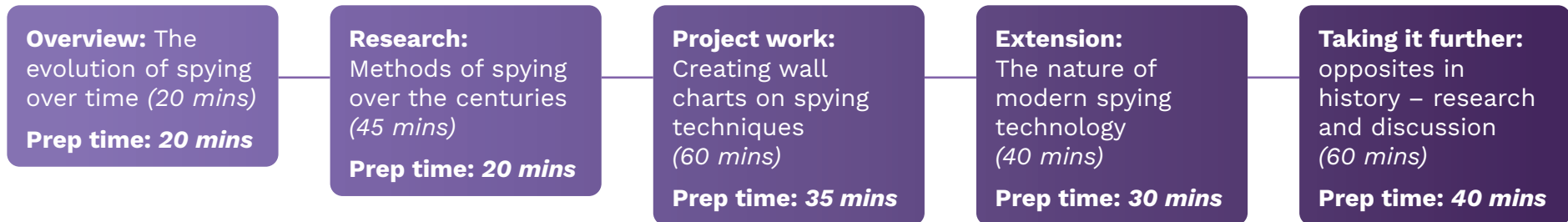
Prep time: 20 mins

Debate: Protecting or dethroning Elizabeth: what would you do?
(90 mins)

Prep time: 45 mins

- **Introductory task:** Ask students to read the description and reviews on the Reteach website for *Elizabeth's Spymaster* by Robert Hutchinson, for an overview of Francis Walsingham. Explore the concept of international espionage in a 16th-century context. What were the areas of ideological conflict in the 16th century? How could information be stored and shared? How easy/difficult would it be to find out about the plans and activities of rival foreign powers? What might be the motives driving a double agent, for example, revenge, money, politics, religion, personal gain?
- **Paired activity:** Students should work in pairs to research Francis Walsingham further using the title *Queen's Agent* by John Cooper. Ask students to think about what motivated Walsingham specifically. He was a fierce protector of Queen Elizabeth I, so consider how far religious motivation could have been a personal factor. Explore how Walsingham's experience in exile 1553–8 and in France 1570–3 might have affected his attitudes and actions. Students should create a timeline of Walsingham's early life and consider how that influenced his ideas.
- **Greater depth:** Discuss with the class the extent to which Queen Elizabeth I was involved with the espionage undertaken in her name. To what extent did she control England? How far was that affected by her gender? To what extent were the likes of spymasters such as Francis Walsingham ultimately under her control? How far did Walsingham have autonomy to carry out his covert operations?
- **Debate:** Read extracts from *Elizabeth's Spymaster* and research the internet on methods used for espionage in the Elizabethan era. Students could use their material from the introductory task as the basis for this. Overall, they could draw on forgeries, entrapment, double agents, disguise/aliases, cryptography, torture, and assassination. When you have gathered this information, divide the class into two. One group are protectors of the queen, while the other group are conspirators plotting to dethrone her. Ask each group to think about what they would do in their different roles, using only Elizabethan methods of espionage.

Longer planning time available



- **Overview:** Think holistically about how spying over the centuries has evolved. This is not only in the technology used, but the motivations behind why it happens. How far is spying a reflection of the personal motives of the spy, or the needs of national governments? Are there any limits on governments when it comes to national security?
- **Research:** Brainstorm with your class the methods used for spying over the centuries, for example, ciphers in Elizabethan England, radio transmissions in the Second World War, and Cold War double agents.
- **Project work:** Create a wall chart with your students showing this evolution of methods and ask them to identify similarities across different eras; Elizabethan, the Second World War, and Cold War eras would offer good places for comparison. For example, can the use of double agents be traced across all three eras? How did the Elizabethan period communicate information before the advent of radio?
- **Extension:** You could take the wall chart further to include a section on how students think modern day technology has changed spying and how it might shape the future evolution of spying (for example, electronic eavesdropping, AI etc.). Students could also use a smart device to take a picture of the wall chart so it can be glued into their books for future revision. **Taking it further:** Explore the concept of the spectrum of oppositions in history, for example, the Protestant/Catholic divide, left/right politics, communism vs capitalism, monarchy/republic, class conflict. Have a class discussion (using appropriate sensitivity) to explore how deep-seated such divisions might be, and the historical reasons behind them. This can also serve to promote tolerance and compassion for others' beliefs.

List 2: *Female spies and secret agents in WW2: The Special Operations Executive*

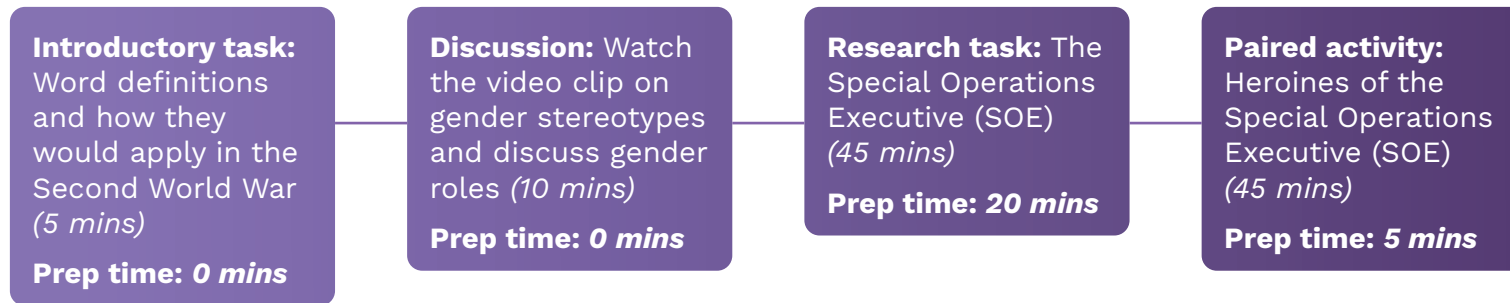
Enquiry questions

1. What motivates someone to become a spy (for example, religious motivation, personal motivation, loyalty to one's country, etc.)?
2. What challenges are faced by spies (for example, being undercover, how to build trust, who to trust, effects on their families, etc.)?
3. How far does spying actually achieve its goals? Are there examples where spying can be shown to have had a significant impact on history?
4. To what extent was Queen Elizabeth I able to use her royal power to manipulate the men around her to do what she wanted?
5. How far do you think forgery has evolved over the centuries?

Curriculum and specification mapping

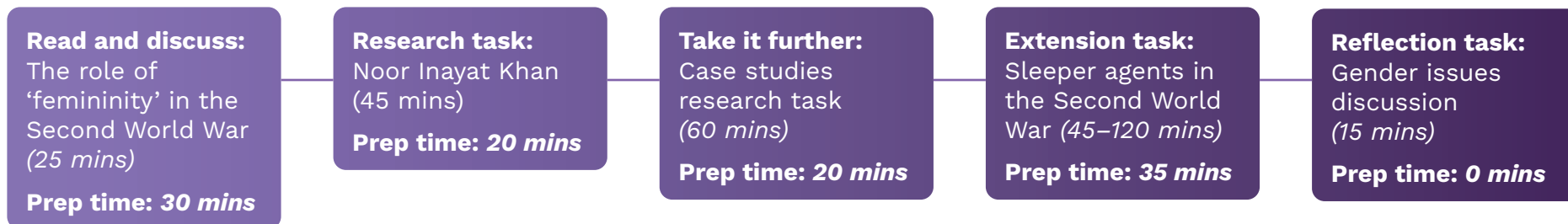
- **KS3 curriculum:** Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day
- **KS4 curriculum:** Modern (1700–present day)
(Geographical context European and/or wider world settings)
- **Edexcel specification:** London and the Second World War, 1939–45
- **OCR specification:** The First and Second World Wars: the beginnings of 'total war', including the impact on people's lives, increased state power and the changing relationship between the state and the people.

Not much planning time available



- **Introductory task:** Discuss general themes of spying, espionage, duplicity, forgery, and cyphers with your class, explaining what each means and why they exist. Students can then write a definition of each word followed by an explanation of how they could have been used against Nazi occupation forces in Europe.
- **Discussion:** Watch the four-minute clip *The British Family – Gender roles in the 1950s* with your class. What views do students have about how gender roles (in Britain) have changed since this time? Discuss perceived gender roles in spying; you could allude to James Bond over the years from the first film to the most recent film. Are attitudes changing to gender stereotypes? Do students think there could or should be a female James Bond? How significant is it that there have now been two female Director-Generals of MI5 in the last 20 years?
- **Research task:** Read the introduction on the Reteach website <https://reteach.org.uk/subject/history/female-spies-and-secret-agents-in-ww2-the-special-operations-executive>. Ask students to research the following questions: What was the Special Operations Executive (SOE)? How did it work? What led to women being recruited to the SOE?
- **Paired activity:** Create CVs or personality profiles for the women covered in *The Heroines of SOE* by Beryl Escott on the Reteach website. This could cover both their backgrounds as well as their particular skills and areas of operation. Each chapter covers one woman, and is only five pages, so offers an ideal level of detail.

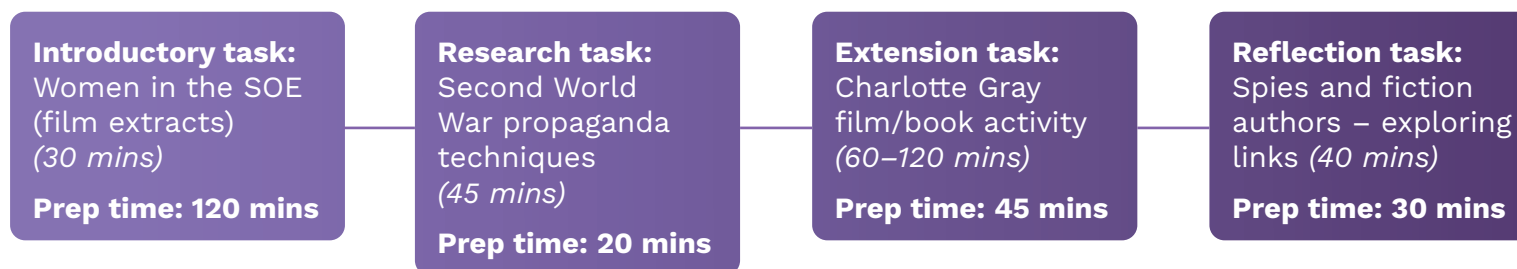
Some planning time available



- **Read and discuss:** Read the book *Behind Enemy Lines* by Juliette Pattinson, or if time is short, read the description on the Reteach website <https://reteach.org.uk/subject/history/female-spies-and-secret-agents-in-ww2-the-special-operations-executive>. Discuss your thoughts on the book with students by tasking them to think about how gender roles played a part in the lives of SOE agents, for example, the concept of how women might be less suspicious in the era of the Second World War, using their 'femininity as armour'. Discuss how – in this case at least – Britain's wartime leaders and the SOE regarded being female as an advantage.
- **Research task:** Introduce the concept of race alongside gender in the world of spying through the book *Spy Princess, the Life of Noor Inayat Khan*. Ask students to find out about her family background, how she was similar/different to other Second World War female spies, then use the National Archive site: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/who-was-noor-khan/> to develop your lesson ideas.
Watch the clip about the unveiling of a statue in London to Khan on the website for the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust (see 'Further materials' on the Reteach website), which shows the recognition of her endeavours during the war.
- **Take it further:** Read five of the case studies from *The Heroines of SOE: F Section, Britain's Secret Women in France*. Divide the class into five and allocate one case study to each group. (Case studies could be summarised and provided as worksheets with questions at the end.) Each group could produce:
 1. a timeline of their individual's life
 2. the skills that helped them to be recruited
 3. their motives for spying
 4. a map of occupied Europe, with the areas of operation
 5. an assessment of their role and level of success.

- **Extension task:** Read the 320-page biography about Nancy Wake, or read the description on the Reteach website <https://reteach.org.uk/subject/history/female-spies-and-secret-agents-in-ww2-the-special-operations-executive>. Alternatively, you could search for, and watch, the 1987 TV mini-series about her, or the 2014 docu-drama. Discuss with students the idea of disguise, sleeper agents, and living anonymously. What effect would this type of life and work have had on women – and indeed men – during the Second World War?
- **Reflection task:** Think about gender equality in the SOE. There was equality of training for men and women, although not all jobs were open to women after completion of the training. How and why did this equality dissipate in the post-war years, and how far-reaching is gender inequality in the modern day?

Longer planning time available



- **Introductory task:** Watch key extracts from the two-hour 2019 film *A Call to Spy* with your class which dramatises the story of a group of women (including Noor Inayat Khan) recruited to the SOE. It provides a useful overview of the training the agents underwent, the risks they took, and the courage they had.
- **Research task:** Find five examples of war propaganda and compare them to the modern concept of fake news. To what extent are they similar, and how far do they differ?
- **Extension task:** You could watch the 2001 film *Charlotte Gray* with your class, and/or read the book by Sebastian Faulks, upon which the film is based. This further explores the idea of disguise being used to anonymise one's existence in order to obtain information. (You can access a précis of the book here: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/133937.Charlotte_Gray)
- **Reflection task:** Assess why so many spies became writers in the 20th century. Research the work of John le Carre, Graham Greene, Ian Fleming and Somerset Maugham and consider how important the creation of a fictional world is to both spies and novelists. How far does the writing career of Stella Rimmington, who was the first female head of MI5, show changes to the role of women in spying?