

Teachers' Guide for *Secret Liberators: Canada's SOE Agents in Occupied France*.

Introduction: "Bond. James Bond."

For more than six decades an enduring genre in pop culture has been the espionage movie with James Bond as the archetype with scores of imitations in movies and television from Jason Bourne and Mission Impossible to Maxwell Smart and McIver. The fictional spy character has origins in real life and these origins shall be presented as a sample lesson in this guide.

This guide focuses on the people, work, and accomplishments of the Special Operations Executive or SOE. It operated during WW-2 following the defeat of France. SOE was based in the UK and recruited hundreds of men and women, including Canadians, to go behind enemy lines. In such a hostile environment their mission was to link up with resistance fighters, supply them with weapons and other resources, and assist in disrupting Nazi communications and transportation systems by whatever means necessary.

One resource that powerfully presents such people and events is *Secret Liberators: Canada's SOE Agents in Occupied France*. This 47-minute documentary film was produced by Breakthrough Entertainment and is presented by the King and Empire Foundation whose mission is to preserve important aspects of Canadian history www.kingandempire.ca *Secret Liberators* and the other films are free to use. Note that it may take 30 seconds to access the film.

While Vimy Ridge, trench warfare, *In Flanders Fields*, Dieppe, and D Day are universally featured in Canadian History curricula for the 20th Century, there are many important events and ideas that go unnoticed yet are worth memorialization and commemoration. In World War Two what happened behind enemy lines turned out to be a key to victory. The people and their stories should be recognized and studied for applications to our present and future lives.

This guide has several sections.

1. Film Organization and Themes to Explore
2. Some Key Questions to Use
3. Strategies for getting the most out of the film
4. Sample Lessons
5. Extensions for going further and deeper, including some leads to other "secret liberators"

Section 1 Film Organization and Themes

The 47-minute film has several points where there are clear breaks so you can stop the film to explore the main features of each part, or you can choose to show some parts and not others- leaving students to explore according to their interests or as an aspect of independent research projects.

Overall Themes that can be explored throughout the film.

The World of Spies: throughout human history governments have had agents in foreign countries, even during peacetime, to “keep an eye” on developments that may affect their country. At the highest and sophisticated level (originated in Europe in the 14th century CE) ambassadors to a country are there to ensure peaceful and beneficial relationships between the country to which they are assigned and their home state. They operated (mostly) in the open.

During wartime agents work in secret as noted in the film. One source for exploring this theme is the International Spy Museum in Washington D.C. (www.spymuseum.org). Another source would be to do an online search for “Special Operations Executive” that leads to a number of comprehensive sites in the UK where SOE was created.

Technology in War: While we make a big deal in our classes of planes, tanks, aircraft, poison gas, etc. the world of secret agents has an amazing array of technological devices crucial to the mission. *Secret Liberators* introduces us to codes, radio links, direction finders, magnetic mines and more. For those wishing to go further into this realm, the Spy Museum noted above has an array of offerings, each of which could lead an interested student deep into this world. In doing so, this theme has its modern equivalents in most classrooms and familiar to most students, especially social media. One issue to explore, and can be explored in *Secret Liberators*, is how a particular technology, the radio message can be used for good or for ill as it was in the “radio game”. The two-sided nature of social media has become increasingly important in our world and adds more need for “media literacy” as part of school curriculum.

Heroism: Throughout *Secret Liberators*, Norman Christie, the historian who appears in the documentary, often notes and praises the work of those in SOE. How were the people in this documentary “heroic”? Is there a difference between being heroic and being foolish? How can young people be “heroic” today and in the future during peacetime?

The following Canadians were featured: Al Sirois, Gustave Biéler, aka “Guy”, Frank Pickersgill and John Macalister as well as numerous French resistance fighters and British agents such as Yolande Beeckman. These people have fascinating histories worth exploring. Resources for going further appear at the end of this guide.

Here is how the documentary breaks down with brief breaks to mark each part. Each part introduces the time period to be explored.

Section 2 Key Questions

Some of the key questions presented in individual parts can apply to other parts of the film.

Part 1- from the fall of France to the spring of 1943 (ends at 13:40 minutes)

- The creation of the SOE: goals and strategies, training of agents and why they were fluent in French and sometimes other languages?
- Key Questions: Why would anyone join? What dangers did they face? How did the SOE avoid detection?

- What made St. Quentin a base for SOE operations?
- How did the Germans respond to the work of the SOE?

Part 2- the summer of 1943 (ends at 23 min.)

- How did the SOE operate in secret?
- What mission was featured here? What happened?
- What was the “Radio Game”?

Part 3- fall and winter of 1943-4 (ends at 30 minutes 30 sec)

- What role did technology play in the operations of the SOE and the German forces?

Part 4- spring of 1944 and D Day (ends at 39 minutes 40 seconds)

- How did the mission change in advance of D Day?
- Why was Al Sirois smiling through the telling of his tale?
- How did the Radio Game end?
- What was the significance of the files marked N and N (nacht und nebel)?

Part 5- conclusion

- What happened to the SOE prisoners?
- What was Al Sirois feeling as he made his final comments in the film?

There are a couple of “sensitive” scenes of torture and death that may not be suitable for viewing. These include the last section from Part 1 at about the 13-minute mark for about 30 seconds and the beginning of Part 5 from the 41-minute mark for about 2 minutes 15 seconds. **Be sure to preview these sections before deciding to show them!**

Section 3 Strategies for getting the most out of *Secret Liberators* (or any other presentation)

The Use of Visible Thinking Routines.

One characteristic of effective learning is that learners “think” about what they are learning and can articulate what is happening in their thinking (metacognition). The idea of making thinking “visible” to both teachers and students comes out of the work of Project Zero at Harvard University. It currently consists of a rich website with links to downloadable articles and videos as well as a book with its own dvd (Ritchhart, R, Church, M and Morrison, K. (2011). *Making Thinking Visible: How To Promote Engagement Understanding, and Independence for All Learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass).

A key implementable feature of this approach is the use of “thinking routines”. Routines exist in all classrooms; they are patterns we use to operate our classrooms with our students. Classrooms have routines that serve to manage student behavior and interactions, to organizing the work of learning, and to establish rules for communication and discourse. Visible thinking routines structure the way students go about the process of learning. These learning routines can be designed to promote students' thinking, such as asking students what they know, what they want to know, and what they have learned as

part of a unit of study. These are simple-to-use strategies that through observations and conversations bring the products of thinking to the surface by making them visible both to you and to your students. They often serve as a pre-test or post-test with student group discussion in between as they share ideas and perspectives. Repeated use of a few can become thinking “habits” for students they consciously use when the occasion merits or when you offer a prompt.

Each routine:

- is goal oriented in that it targets specific types of thinking,
- gets used repeatedly in the classroom,
- consists of only a few steps,
- is easy to learn and teach,
- is easy to support when students are engaged in the routine,
- can be used across a variety of contexts, and
- can be used by the group or by the individual.

Some routines promote understanding by making connections between old and new knowledge. Some promote fairness through examining different perspectives. Some routines encourage students to find the truth behind competing claims. Some are creative by encouraging students to look for new takes on ideas.

You can begin with a following short video.

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/thinking-routines-video>

One of the ideas it promotes is judicious use of a few of the routines so that teachers and students get familiar with them. We do get better with practice! At this stage when they have become “routine”, they can then be adapted and build upon.

Here is a link to the large and growing toolbox of routines categorized by type and function. There are dozens. <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

The following routine can be used throughout *Secret Liberators*.

“Connect, Extend, Challenge” for Assessing ANY Reading, Presentation or Workshop:

Here is an overview of the routine. For both students and busy teachers.

- **CONNECT:** How are the ideas and information presented **CONNECTED** to what you already knew? Students may know something about events in World War-2 described in the film
- **EXTEND:** What new ideas did you get that **EXTENDED** or pushed your thinking in new directions? If students see new connections, new knowledge or new ways of thinking about the period, people or events in question they have learned.
- **CHALLENGE:** What is still **CHALLENGING** or confusing for you to get your mind around? What questions, wonderings or puzzles do you now have? World War 2 was and still is full of puzzles we solve with new evidence and information. The last section of the guide may help students explore the challenges they have in understanding the topics.

Having students write, discuss and share their connections, extensions, and challenges can help them learn even more deeply. Here is a routine to help such thinking and sharing.

Think-Pair-Share

There are many versions of think-pair-share, a cooperative structure developed by Frank Lyman (1981) in which

1. You pose a question or problem.
2. Students are given time to think (30-60 seconds).
3. Students pair and discuss their responses.
4. Students share their combined insights in a whole class discussion or question-answer sequence.

This technique helps students process the information they are learning through wait time and discussion of their ideas.

There are more than a thousand variations of this strategy (Kagan, 2003). Two of the more popular ones are

- Think-Write-Pair-Share has students jot down their ideas before turning to a partner to discuss them. This version increases individual accountability, since you can walk around the room to ensure that students just sit back and let their partner do all the thinking.
- Think-pair-square has pairs pair with another pair before sharing with the class.

Think-pair-share can be used anytime in a lesson.

- at the beginning to assess prior knowledge or opinion on the topic to be explored in a unit,
- within the lesson to check for understanding,
- at the end of the lesson to assess understanding

Lyman, F. T. (1981). The responsive classroom discussion: The inclusion of all students. In A. Anderson (Ed.), *Mainstreaming Digest* (pp. 109-113). College Park: University of Maryland Press.

I used to think.... Now I think....

A routine that can be used at the end of *Secret Liberators* to show how the documentary affects attitudes towards the people and events of the war is "I used to think.... Now I think...."

(http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03c_Core_routines/UsedToThink/UsedToThink_Routine.htm). Here are directions you can give to students. If you do this routine WITH them, they will recognize your thinking too.

"When we began this study of _____, you all had some initial ideas about it and what it was all about. In just a few sentences, I want to write what it is that you used to think about _____. Take a minute to think back and then write down your response to "I used to think..."

Now, I want you to think about how your ideas about _____ have changed as a result of what we've been studying/doing/discussing. Again in just a few sentences write down what you now think about _____. Start your sentences with, "But now, I think..."

The next strategy can be used in face-to-face classrooms or in online breakout rooms set up for pairs work featuring purposeful talk.

Why Talk?

Talk allows students to

- take risks with colleagues
- try out ideas through hypothesizing, verifying, adapting, and revising
- gain deeper insights and understandings when the talk is purposeful and in pairs than can be attained by one student working alone
- promote quality writing and/or quality whole classroom discussion after students have talked through the ideas, issues, concepts, and information.

The More We Talk, The More We Learn!

Why Pairs?

- easier to set up than larger groups
- can be combined and divided when appropriate
- easier to monitor and manage to ensure individual accountability

It's hard to hide in a pair as we see in the strategy below.

Pairs View (Morton, 1996)

When showing a video or delivering a lengthy presentation, teachers need to give students an opportunity to construct meaning: a necessary step in learning facts and concepts. Constructing meaning consists of linking old knowledge to new knowledge, making predictions, verifying them and filling in a lot of unstated information. For example, your prior knowledge about sharks will enable you to make predictions about what you will see in a documentary film about them. Such predictions are verified or refuted as you watch the film. Finally, what you know about sharks helps you fill in pieces of unusual information; e.g., that Sharks have no backbone- it's cartilage. Here is one technique to help students do this.

1. Pair students A and B.
2. When showing a lengthy film, stop every ten minutes or so (five minutes for younger children).
3. When the film is stopped for the first time, tell the pairs that A (or B) will be the summarizer. Declaring the roles at the last minute keeps both members of the pair accountable. If you decide that A is the summarizer, then A
 - o summarizes for B the information and ideas presented so far
 - o tells B what he/she finds most interesting about what was presented
 - o identify anything that was confusing and try to clarify, with B's help
4. After three minutes, the film is turned on again
5. After a suitable period, the film is again stopped, and B takes the lead. Or you can repeat with A.

Alternatively, the teacher can provide a worksheet or a series of prompts to spur discussion and to enable students to record appropriate points. Prompts might ask students to summarize, predict, elaborate, describe, determine the main idea, compare, formulate questions, and identify aspects that interested or confused them about the presentation to date. Morton, T. (1996). *Co-operative Learning & Social Studies: Towards Excellence and Equity*. Kagan Co-operative Learning Publishers, 1996.

The separate parts of *Secret Liberators* can serve to use Pairs View. In a class discussion students can share, as in think-pair-share, what they have learned and you as a teacher can recognize the impact you and *Secret Liberators* have had on their understandings.

Even at the end of a class you can take the last minute to get students to show you what they learned through a **one-minute paper**. They simply take a piece of paper and write for a maximum of ONE MINUTE the most significant idea from the documentary that stuck in their heads. They sign their paper and hand it to the teacher as they exit the classroom: an exit visa. This idea originated as a way of assessing the impact of university lectures and there are a several YouTube videos that demonstrate it.

Section 4 Sample Lessons

The above strategies serve as lessons or parts of lessons to be used the *Secret Liberators*. Here are 4 stand-alone lessons or parts of lessons that can be used during after the film. Each sample has three parts: **minds on, action, and consolidation or before, during, and after** (or similar). Minds on is like a warm-up to the lesson. Action is where students learn the new concept. Consolidation is where we take our new learning and summarize it/practice.

Sample 1- Women in the SOE

While the SOE agents interviewed and extensively referred to in *Secret Liberators* are men, there are also references to the important role female agents played. This lesson allows students to explore some of these people further.

Minds on- Before showing *Secret Liberators* ask students to hypothesize the roles female agents might have played in the war.

Action- During the film student note the roles the women featured below (Yolande Beekman, Noor Inayat Khan and Yvonne Rudellat performed as SOE members

Consolidation- Have students compare what they learned about the above agents to what they hypothesized about the roles women agents played using the I used to think.... Now I think.... Visible thinking routine.

Extension1 (of 2)- To students State the following: "Your mission is to learn more about these and other female agents and their work during World War 2.

Yolande Beekman



Noor Inayat Khan



Yvonne Rudellat



Extension 2 Erika Jarvis in the November 25, 2016, of *Vanity Fair* wrote an interesting article: “Five Badass Female Spies Who Deserve Their Own World War II Movie”. Have students find the article online and in a class or small group discussion have them decide if Erika is right.

Sample 2- Tech in War

The museums in the U.S. and the U.K. noted in the World of Spies themes section have descriptions of the many technical innovations invented or popularized in WW2: from coding and weaponry to radar to penicillin.

Minds on- Have students recall the role of technology in World War 1 and debate which technology made the biggest impact in the war.

Action- During *Secret Liberators* have student note of all the technologies used.

Consolidation- Have students debate which technology made the biggest impact in the war.

Extension Hedy Lamarr was a famous actress in the 1930s



But she was also an inventor. Your mission is to find out what she invented and how it influenced events in World War 2.

Sample 2a Coding in the SOE

“In War-time, truth is so precious that she must always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.”
Winston Churchill.

Much of the technology featured above deals with communication and the need to code messages so that the enemy could not figure out what was going on. One famous example from World War Two was the Enigma coding machine used by the Nazis to communicate with its various military operators. *Secret Liberators* identifies some of the communication tricks used in the war and the ways the Nazis used the “radio game” to counter the work of the SOE. While there were many ways to disguise messages so that the enemy could not figure out their meaning, we shall focus on Morse Code, named after Samuel Morse, one of its inventors. It was developed along with the telegraph in the first half of the 1800s. Until the end of the 20th century

it was the dominant system for armies, ships trains, and airplanes to communicate. Morse Code was a crucial communications tool in World War 2. While other systems have come to take over the world of coding even today some in the military still learn to use it.

This section and advice for other aspects of the teachers’ guide comes from work with Jennifer Legare, special education teacher in the Peel District School Board. Much of her teacher career has been with non-academic students. She found that the world of spies was a hit with her students and she focused on this beyond what history teachers normally do. Among the things here classes did were learning about different spies, take on different personas and tested by an interviewer (her vice-principal) to see if they'd stay in character. They learned Morse code and made light bulb Morse code machines using batteries and flashlight bulbs. The unit would end with a secret mission that required them to solve all kinds of clues and mysteries, find secret drops, or other spies (staff) and end with a pizza party at the end. To quote Jennifer: “It was always the best and most fun week”

Minds on- During the film have student note all the ways agents communicated with London and each other.

Action- Teach them Morse Code: the oldest continuous code used from 1844 to almost 2000. It is still taught to some servicemen and women today.

Here is the code and its translation into English.

A ● ■■	U ● ● ■■
B ■■ ● ● ●	V ● ● ● ■■
C ■■ ● ■■ ●	W ● ■■ ■■
D ■■ ● ●	X ■■ ● ● ■■
E ●	Y ■■ ● ■■ ■■
F ● ● ■■ ●	Z ■■ ■■ ● ●
G ■■ ■■ ●	
H ● ● ● ●	
I ● ●	
J ● ■■ ■■ ■■	
K ■■ ● ■■ ■■	1 ● ■■ ■■ ■■ ■■
L ● ■■ ● ●	2 ● ● ■■ ■■ ■■
M ■■ ■■	3 ● ● ● ■■ ■■
N ■■ ●	4 ● ● ● ● ■■
O ■■ ■■ ■■	5 ● ● ● ● ●
P ● ■■ ■■ ●	6 ■■ ● ● ● ●
Q ■■ ■■ ● ■■	7 ■■ ■■ ● ● ●
R ● ■■ ●	8 ■■ ■■ ■■ ● ●
S ● ● ●	9 ■■ ■■ ■■ ■■ ●
T ■■	0 ■■ ■■ ■■ ■■ ■■

Here is a sample message courtesy of Jennifer including instructions for students.

Writing messages in code can sometimes be tricky. Use this handy tool to help!

How to:

1. Write your message in the top, grey bars. Each square would be a letter on it's own.
2. Use your Morse Code translator page to convert your letters to the correct Morse Code symbol.
3. Re-write your message, only in Morse Code, on the next page for your classmates to translate!

I		L	O	V	E		H	I	S
..		.-..	---	...-
T	O	R	Y	!!					
-	---	.-.	-.---						

Consolidation- Have the class figure out the following message.

 - - . - - - - - - - - -

 - - - - - . . . - . . . - . . . - . . .

 - - -

Extension- Charles “Checker” Tomkins represents an aspect of coding unknown to many. Your mission is to find out what and who he represented and how it influenced events in World War 2. Here is a place to start

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indigenous-peoples-and-the-first-world-war>



Sample 3- Coping with Heroism

The popular movie and TV portrayal of spies does not often show the complexities of human behaviour. *Secret Liberators* offers insights into the real world of espionage. Here is an approach to explore the nature of heroism in the real world.

Minds On- Ask students to write down as many emotions as they can

Action- During the film have students identify the emotions revealed by the former SOE agents as they recount their stories. For those agents who are described have students imagine the emotions they felt during the events they were involved such as hiding from the gestapo, being caught, planting bombs on the canal in St. Quentin, Guy’s Christmas in 1943, hearing of the D-Day landings, the liberation of Paris, the end of the war, facing death in the concentration camps

Consolidation- For one of the events write a poem from the point of view of the agent with title referring to the event or situation portrayed.

Extension- There were some surprising people who contributed to the Allies including Josephine Baker, one of the most famous entertainers in the world during the 1920s and 30s. Her story is fascinating even without her activities in World War 2.



Sample 4- Camp X and a Man Called Intrepid: An Inspiration for James Bond



Camp X www.camp-x.com was the unofficial name of the secret Special Training School No. 103, a place for training covert agents in secret operations methods including those used by the SOE though none of those featured in *Secret Liberators* were trained there. It was located between Whitby and Oshawa on the Canadian shore of Lake Ontario. Although the buildings are all gone. There is a park called Intrepid Park. East of Oshawa and not far away from Camp X was Camp 30 for German prisoners of war.

Minds on- Why were these camps located on the shores of Lake Ontario- hint- think about lines of communication, technologies in the war, and the distance from the various battlefields in the war itself.

Action- Have students explore the website www.camp-x.com and note additional or new information and ideas about the world of espionage to add to what they have learned from *Secret Liberators*. In their explorations have students figure out why the site of Camp X is called Intrepid Park and what that has to do with James Bond.

Consolidation- Have students compare what they learned about the world of espionage in exploring Camp X to what they learned from *Secret Liberators* using the I used to think.... Now I think.... Visible thinking routine.

Extension- There were other espionage training activities in Canada. Here is one to explore when students research Henry Fung.



Section 5 Going Further and Deeper

The resources for exploring the topic of secrecy in WW2 are not so secret anymore.

For more on Macalister and Pickersgill online sources include [Requiem for the Brave | By Bruce Rolston | Soldiers Tower Ceremony](#), [John Kenneth Macalister](#), [Frank Pickersgill](#), [Alumni who fought in World War Two | University of Toronto Magazine - University of Toronto Magazine](#), [Behind Enemy Lines | By Alec Scott | U of T during World War Two](#), [Espionage Stories | University of Toronto Magazine - University of Toronto Magazine](#), from Military Wikipedia [Frank Pickersgill](#), from Macleans magazine [They were 'to set Europe ablaze' - Macleans.ca](#), and from *The Globe and Mail* <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/a-canadian-spy-story-courage-snafus---and-death/article1199233/>

There is a whole series of films on aspects of the war from a Canadian perspective courtesy of the King and Empire Foundation. <https://kingandempire.ca/the-king-country-television-series/> and <https://kingandempire.ca/striking-back/>,

Outside of Canada you can search, in addition to the International Spy Museum in Washington the following

The larger world of secrets in WW2 can be explored in www.secret-WW2.net.

There were other espionage groups including The Ritchie Boys from the US, featured in books, movies, and in a recent episode of CBS' 60 Minutes.