

SECRETS

Mark It on the Map

Nevada (Virginia City), **Vietnam, France** (Normandy), **Czechoslovakia** (Prague), **Caucasus Mountains, Middle East, Mali, Congo, Gabon, Sierra Leone**

Introduction

Ask a student volunteer to read aloud “Editor’s Message” on pages 2–3. Have the class think of some characters in books, TV shows, or movies who have secret identities. Discuss why someone would want or need to have a secret identity. Begin a chart similar to the one below and tell students to add to it as they read through the issue.

Vocabulary

initiate (n.)	corruption
negotiation	classified
systematically	disillusioning
cryptogram	decoder
mythical	diviner
ancestral	nurture
enthronement	intermediary
scepter	encode
intuitive	attribute (n.)

CHARACTER	SECRET IDENTITY	REASON WHY
Clark Kent	Superman	To fight criminals more effectively

Questions for Discussion

- Why do people like to have secrets?
- Give an example of how a secret changed history.
- How has exposing secrets about dangers in the workplace brought about changes in our lives?
- Why do people keep secrets about themselves? After reading “Letting the Cat Out of the Bag” on pages 4–10, list as many reasons as you can think of.
- Why do people like to wear costumes and masks?
- What secrets do Luba kings keep in a covered basket? What powers do these secrets give the king?
- What secrets do Luba diviners know? What kinds of problems can they solve?
- What secrets do all Luba women know?
- How are Mwadi linked to kings who have died?
- What does being initiated into a group mean? Give an example.
- According to some groups in Africa, how can deceased ancestors help people?
- What information can patterns and colors in African art reveal?
- Why is Kabbalah kept secret and revealed to special people only in stages?
- What do Jews believe are the ten Attributes of God? How can Kabbalah be used to draw a person closer to God?
- What problems did the king’s secret cause the barber in the story “March’s Ears” on pages 31–33?
- What is the purpose of the *umana* ceremony for boys among the Ndumba people of Papua New Guinea?

Writing Workout

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Work in small groups to create mystery stories about a secret and its consequences. Leave a trail of clues so that readers can try to solve the mystery along with you.
- Form a small group to turn a mystery story or a tale about a secret into a radio or TV play to perform for the class.
- Write a letter in secret code to a friend. Don’t forget to fold it according to the directions on pages 12–13.
- Have you ever been part of a club or group that had secret passwords, handshakes, or other secrets? Make up some secrets for a club and write about them. You do not have to share them with anyone else if you wish.

Viewpoints

Ask students this question: Why do you think people feel better when they can share a secret with someone else?

Then and Now

- Being “in” means knowing some secrets that others do not know. Have students describe some clothing that is currently “in” and marks a person as being part of the “in” group. Then have them imagine how people who do not have that clothing feel about being “out.”
- Just as the Ndumba people have their *umana* ceremony, many other groups have ceremonies to mark the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. Some examples are Christian confirmation, Jewish bar and bat mitzvah, and a Hispanic ceremony known as *quinceañeras*, in which a 15-year-old girl is presented to society, much like a debutante in other groups. Ask students whether they have ever participated in or seen any of these ceremonies. If so, have them describe it and tell how they felt about it.

Get Into Art

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Make a mask that uses different colors or patterns to stand for information such as whether the person is male or female, a king or queen, a spirit, a diviner, or an ancestor. Create a key to your mask showing what each color or pattern stands for.
- Decorate a cigar box or other small box where you can keep your secret letters, diary, and other special things. Think of someplace to hide it.
- Design a costume for yourself that expresses how you would like to be.

Just for Fun

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Follow the directions in “Secret Letter” on pages 11–13 to learn a special way to fold a secret note.
- Read “Cryptogram” on pages 12–13 and try to decipher the coded message.
- Make “Chicken With a Secret” on pages 18–19.
- Connect the dots in the puzzle on page 27 to create an African mask.

Secret Sayings

Have students collect sayings about secrets, such as “let the cat out of the bag.” Suggest sources such as a reference book about proverbs and a book of quotations. Each student who brings in a saying should illustrate it. Display these on a bulletin board or wall.

Codes

Encourage small groups of students to make up secret codes and challenge the other students to break it. Students may wish to do research on secret codes by reading the books mentioned in “Further Exploring” on pages 38–39.

Literature Enrichment

- Many stories revolve around a secret. Encourage students to read the books listed in “Further Exploring” on pages 38–39 and report on them to the class. One way of reporting might be to act out a scene from the book to get others interested in reading it.
- Students who like to read mysteries can report on their favorites to the class.

People Around the World

Have students find out more about the following cultures: Ndumba, Luba, Pende, Songye, Kongo, Bembe, Kota, Bwa, Mende.

Follow These Footsteps

Daniel Ellsberg

Ryan White

Abraham

Rembrandt van Rijn

Pandora

George Eliot

Rabbi Yehuda

Belshazzar

Nathan Hale

Mbidi Kiluwe

Loew