



Educator's Guide

The Spy Catcher's of Maple Hill

by Megan Frazer Blakemore
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www.meganfrazerblakemore.com



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About *The Spy Catcher's of Maple Hill*

Hazel Kaplansky is a firm believer in the pursuit of knowledge and truth—and she also happens to love a good mystery. When suspicions swirl that a Russian spy has infiltrated her small town of Maple Hill, Vermont, amidst the fervor of Cold War–era McCarthyism, Hazel knows it's up to her to find a suspect... starting with Mr. Jones, the quietly suspicious grave digger. Plus she's found a perfect sleuthing partner in Samuel Butler, the new boy in school with a few secrets of his own. But as Hazel and Samuel piece together clues from the past and present, the truth is suddenly not what they expected, and what they find reveals more about themselves and the people of their cozy little town than they could ever have imagined.

About this Guide

The educator's guide for *The Spy Catcher's of Maple Hill* includes five different types of activities:

1. **Chapter-by-Chapter Questions:** These questions check for understanding. They can be used by individual readers or in a class setting, whether the children are reading to themselves or this is a class read-aloud.
2. **Discussion Questions:** These are big-picture, thematic questions that are perfect for group discussion or writing exercises.
3. **Research Activities:** These activities require children to research for a greater understanding of the issues in the book and of their own world.
4. **Fun Activities for One Kid—Or a Bunch:** These activities highlight aspects of the book in a fun way. They would be perfect for a book group or a summer reading activity.
5. **Further Reading:** A list of suggested books to read with *The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill*.

The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill and The Common Core

The Common Core State Standards* (<http://www.corestandards.org/>) ask students to read a range of texts that are both rigorous and complex. Using the standards as a guide, as well as the activities in this packet, *The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill*, is an appropriate text to use in the Common Core Classroom.

The Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading:

Standard	Applications for <i>The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill</i>
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Chapter questions ask students to read closely and to cite textual evidence.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2	Discussion questions encourage students to determine central ideas/themes.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3	Discussion questions, specifically Question 2, asks students to explain how individuals develop over the course of the book.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4	The book includes historical vocabulary, such as “Red Scare” and “Communism,” as well as slang (e.g. “square”) which students must infer from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5	Discussion Question 8 asks students to analyze and evaluate the structure of the novel, particularly the withholding and revelation of information.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6	Discussion Question 7 asks students to analyze and evaluate the use of close third person for the narration.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9	Students should be encouraged to read related texts (see “Further Reading”).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10	<i>The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill</i> is a complex literary text.

The Common Core Anchor Standards for Writing:

Standard	Applications for <i>The Water Castle</i>
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2	In the research activity “Historical Research” students are asked to research and report on a historical element from the book.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7	The Research Activities ask students to complete short research projects.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8	In the course of completing the Research Activities, students must gather information from multiple sources. The interviewing activity focuses on a typically underused form of research.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10	The writing activities in this packet can be part of a program that encourages routine writing.

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Part 1: Chapter by Chapter Questions

Chapters 1-4:

1. On page three, Mrs. Sinclair writes that it is October 23, 1953. Before that, what clues were there that this novel is set in the past?
2. What are some of the facts that Hazel shares about the glockenspiel?
3. Based on the descriptions in Chapter 2, can you draw a map of what you think the cemetery looks like or a picture of Mr. Jones?
4. What are Hazel's favorite books?
5. What are some things about Mr. Jones that Hazel finds mysterious or suspicious?
6. Why does Hazel think that Samuel is a ghost at first?

Chapters 5-8:

1. In Chapter 5, "Free Air," you learn a lot about Hazel both from how Mr. Wall describes her and how she sees his shop. Make your own list of words to describe Hazel.
2. When Hazel reads the article in the newspaper about the spies at the Maple Hill Factory, does she believe what she reads?
3. Hazel talks to Miss Lerner about the article. Does Miss Lerner think there are Communists in Maple Hill? Why or why not?
4. What connection does Hazel make between Mr. Jones killing the rat and the movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*?
5. In Chapter 8, "The Gravedigger is a Spy," we start to learn more about Samuel. How are Samuel and Hazel different? How are they alike?
6. What is some of the evidence that Hazel explains to Samuel that supports her idea that Mr. Jones is the spy?

Chapters 9-12:

1. How does Hazel's mother describe Samuel? What does Hazel think of this description?
2. Where does Hazel get her ideas for how to be a good detective? Do you think these are good sources?
3. What instrument is Samuel given to play? What does Hazel get?

4. Does Father Paul think there are Communists in Maple Hill? Why or why not?
5. What kind of investigating does Hazel want to do? What kind of investigating does Samuel prefer?
6. What piece of evidence does Hazel find in the newspaper article that ties Mr. Jones to the Communists?

Chapters 13-16:

1. What suspicious thing does Mr. Jones do with one of the flags in Soldier's Field?
2. How does Hazel imagine that food will be delivered to people in the 21st century?
3. What does Hazel learn about Samuel when he and Mrs. Switzer go to the Lis' Chinese restaurant together?
4. What does Hazel think happened to the Lis' window?
5. What happened to Hazel during the Duck and Cover drill?
6. Why do you think that Mrs. Rushby gave Hazel the benefit of the doubt and let her off with as little punishment as possible?

Chapters 17-20:

1. What book is Hazel going to read before her mother sends her outside?
2. According to the newspaper, who is going to be questioned by the committee investigating Communist activity?
3. What does Hazel find on Alice's grave that she considers her first real evidence that Mr. Jones is a Communist?
4. What does Connie give to Hazel in Chapter 18, "Invitations and Gifts"?
5. What can you see from Samuel's bedroom window?
6. Hazel tells Samuel that she knows all about his mother. What does Hazel think is Samuel's mother's secret? Is she right?
7. What are the women in the store gossiping about?

Chapter 21-24:

1. What is Hazel's brilliant idea that will allow her and Samuel to work on the case together?
2. What do Timmy and Otis fight about?

3. Who comes to see Hazel in the parade? Is she happy about it?
4. What are the observations that Hazel makes of Mr. Jones during the stakeout?
5. What is Mr. Jones carrying when he comes up to Samuel and Hazel?
6. Why is Hazel disappointed by people's reactions to her costume?

Chapter 25-28:

1. Whom do Hazel and Samuel find in the graveyard? What were they doing there?
2. What does Hazel accuse Maryann and Connie of doing?
3. What was Maryann trying to find out by doing the séance? What do you think Connie wanted to know?
4. What doesn't Hazel's father notice when she gets home from visiting Mrs. Buttersbee?
5. Where is Hazel's mother that evening?
6. Maryann and some of the other kids say that Connie might be contagious. What "disease" do they accuse her of having?
7. When Hazel tries to be nice to Connie, what happens?

Chapter 29-32:

1. Why is Hazel so angry at her mother for speaking up at the meeting?
2. What does Hazel find in the garden shed?
3. Whom is Hazel expecting to find when she goes out into the graveyard at night? Whom does she actually discover?
4. What legal term does Hazel use when her mother asks Hazel about the canned goods?
5. When Hazel is cleaning out the mausoleum, Samuel comes and tells her that he's figured something out about Alice's headstone. What is it?
6. Samuel finds a newspaper story that explains who Alice is. Who is she and how is she related to Mr. Jones?
7. How does Samuel define a "real funeral"?

Chapter 33-36:

1. When Hazel goes to Connie's party, who else is there? Why didn't the other kids come?
2. What does Mr. Short tell Hazel about Mr. Jones?
3. When Hazel runs into Miss Lerner at the library after Connie's party, what does she think Miss Lerner wants to talk to her about? What does Miss Lerner actually tell her?
4. What does Mr. Wall fix for her?
5. How does Hazel apologize to Mr. Jones? Is it a good apology?
6. With whom does Hazel speak in the "Interviews & Stakeouts" chapter? What do you think she is asking about?

Chapters 37-40:

1. What does Mr. Jones tell Hazel about herself? Do you think he's right?
2. How did Samuel react to the funeral?
3. When Hazel's father was a boy, he imagined a city that existed in the cemetery. What was some of the evidence that he found to support this idea?
4. What did Mr. Short decide about testifying?
5. Why did Samuel decide to do the triangle solo?
6. What does Samuel decide to make for Mr. Jones?
7. When Hazel and Samuel get to Mr. Jones's house, what do they find that shows them that he left?

Part 2: Discussion Questions

1. Hazel finds a lot of clues about Mr. Jones but puts them together in a way that turns out not to be true. What were some of the mistakes she made as she investigated Mr. Jones? Why do you think she made these mistakes? Have you ever been wrong about someone like this?
2. How does Hazel's understanding of Mr. Jones change over the course of the book? Does this reveal a change in her own character?
3. Where do you think Mr. Jones went?
4. What does it mean to be a triangle person? Think about what Maryann and Connie meant, and then how Hazel and Samuel redefine the words.
5. If you were going to choose a type of rock to take from your home, what kind of rock would you take?
6. If you were going to list your accomplishments on your headstone, the way Hazel wants to, what would yours be?
7. The book is written in the third person, but stays close to Hazel's perspective. This is known as "close third." Why do you think the author made this choice? How might the book have been different in first person? In omniscient (distant) third?
8. While Hazel is interviewing people to prepare for the funeral, the author does not state why she is performing the interviews or who they are about. Why do you think the author chose to keep this secret and structure the novel so that the purpose was revealed at the funeral?

Part 3: Research Activities

Research Activity 1: Interview Family and Friends

In “Researching *The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill*” (available here: <http://www.meganfrazer.com/books/the-spy-catchers-of-maple-hill/>) Megan Frazer Blakemore explains that she interviewed family and friends who lived during the time of the story to find out more about that time period.

You can find out more about what life was like when your parents, grandparents, or other family or friends were children.

- Step 1: Generate a list of questions that you want to know the answers to, such as: *What types of clothes did you wear?* or *How did you get to school?*
- Step 2: Organize these questions in a logical sequence.
- Step 3: Decide how you are going to ask the questions. Will you ask in person, send an email or letter, or set up a survey so you can interview multiple people? Once you decide, prepare as needed.
- Step 4: Ask your questions.
- Bonus: Now that you have your information, try using the details to write a story.

Research Activity 2: Historical Research

The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill is a work of historical fiction that includes many real-life people, events, and ideas. Students can extend their knowledge by researching and reporting on any of the following topics:

- Bomb shelters and fallout shelters
- Duck and cover drills
- Joseph McCarthy
- The Red Scare
- Communism
- TV Dinners and other foods of the 1950s
- Popular television programs of the 1950s (such as *Dragnet*)
- Nancy Drew and other girl detectives
- Halloween
- Women’s rights
- Margaret Chase Smith

Extend the activity: Given what you learned by researching, why do you think the author chose to include this person/event/idea?

Part 4: Fun Activities for One Kid—Or A Bunch

Activity 1: Lemon Juice Notes

You Will Need:

- Lemon juice
- A small cup
- A cotton swab, paint brush, or, like Hazel, a toothpick
- Paper
- A light bulb OR salt and a wax crayon

Directions:

It's simple! Dip your writing instrument (the cotton swab, paint brush, or toothpick) into the lemon juice and then write your note on the paper. When you're finished, pass it to a friend. He or she should hold it near (not on!) a light bulb to make the message appear. (Please ask an adult for help, and never use a halogen lamp.)

Don't have a light bulb you can access easily? You can also sprinkle salt on the lemon juice as it's drying. Dust off the salt, and pass your note. The recipient rubs over it with a wax crayon to make the message appear.

Now you're set to write notes. Need an idea for what to write? In the book, many people jump to conclusions about others and misjudge them. Others, like Mr. Wall, are very good at seeing the best in others. You can write a secret note to a friend with the three words you think best describe him or her. Remember to choose their best qualities. A class, book group, or library group could pick names from a hat and write secret notes to their secret match.

Add some science:

Lemon juice isn't your only option for invisible ink. Milk works just like lemon juice. You can also try mixing equal parts of baking soda and water to make ink. Instead of holding it up to a light though, you carefully paint over it with grape juice concentrate (use a sponge or a paint brush). Another option: Write your note with a white crayon on white paper. To reveal the message, the recipient paints over it with water colors.

- Why do you think these combinations work for invisible ink?
- What other ink or processes might you try? What works the best?

Activity 2: Make your own Investigation Kit

Hazel gathers an investigation kit from things she finds around her house. You can create your own kit, too. Here's a list of suggestions, but be creative:

- Mysteries Notebook (don't take one your parents or guardians might still be using, like Hazel did!)
- A pen or pencil
- A magnifying glass
- A compass
- Snacks
- A secret code: you can find one online or create your own
- A bag to hold all your gear in

Now you're ready to investigate!

Investigate to Create:

Using your investigation kit, go out into your world (your school, your street, your backyard) and gather three clues. Use these three clues to create a mystery story. A mystery should have:

- A crime or incident that needs to be solved
- A suspect
- A detective

Further Reading:

Nonfiction:

Giblin, James Cross: *The Rise and Fall of Senator Joe McCarthy* (Clarion, 2009)

Historical Fiction about the Cold War era:

Gantos, Jack. *Dead End in Norvelt* (Farar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011)

Schmidt, Gary D. *The Wednesday Wars* (Clarion, 2007)

Wiles, Deborah: *Countdown* (Scholastic, 2010)

Read Like Hazel:

Pick up a classic Nancy Drew mystery or one of these great mysteries:

Dionne, Erin: *Moxie and the Art of Rule Breaking* (Dial, 2013)

Konigsberg, E.L. *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (Atheneum, 1967)

Raskin, Ellen: *The Westing Game* (Dutton, 1978)

Stead, Rebecca: *When You Reach Me* (Wendy Lamb Books, 2009)