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Activity Guide

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Henry and Mudge and the Sneaky Crackers

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ABOUT THE STORY

Henry loves a television show about a spy, so he decides to become a spy himself. After he buys a spy kit, he and Mudge go spying. When Henry finds a note written in code, he decides to break the code — and when he does break it, he's amazed at what he finds.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cynthia Rylant has written many other books about Henry and Mudge, including *Henry and Mudge and the Snowman Plan* and *Henry and Mudge and the Starry Night*, both Live Oak Readalongs. Her books have won dozens of awards; in 1993 she received the Newbery Award for her novel *Missing May*. She has always loved big, drooly dogs, just like Mudge, and lives with two of them in her house in Eugene, Oregon.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Sucie Stevenson knows all about big Mudge-like dogs, too — she has two of her own. She has illustrated all the other Henry and Mudge tales.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they have ever played spy or written anything in code. Tell them that this book is about Henry and his dog Mudge and what happens when they decide to become spies.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Why does Henry want to buy a spy kit?"
- "What items are in the spy kit?"
- "What does the code message say in code? What does it say in English?"
- "Who sent the message?"
- "Were you surprised at the identity of the message-sender? Explain." (Solve problems)
- "Do you think Henry and the other spy will become friends? Why or why not?" (Make predictions)

Vocabulary

telescope magnifying glass suspicious flirt

Write these words from the story on the chalkboard. Have volunteers give definitions of the words. Then ask children to work in pairs to write a brief story using all four vocabulary words. Children can share their stories with the rest of the class.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Language Arts: Your Own Spy Show

Henry loves the spy show on television, *The Man in the Mask*. Have children work in small groups to plan their own television spy show. They can choose characters and a setting and develop a plot for the first show.

Math: Cracking the Code

One fun, easy code for children to work with is the letter-number code. Number each letter in the alphabet from a to z with corresponding numbers 1 to 26. Then have children crack the code below. They can go on to write their own code message and send them to classmates.
7 15 15 4 23 15 18 11! 25 15 21 3 18 1 3 11 5 4 20 8 5 3 15 4 5!

Science: Lenses

Henry uses both a telescope and a magnifying glass when he spies. Explain to the class that both of these items use lenses in order to make things easier to see. A telescope makes things that are far away seem nearer. A magnifying glass makes things that are small seem larger. Have children work in small groups to find out how either telescopes or magnifying glasses work. Groups can report back to the rest of the class on what they learn.

Language Arts: Write a Spy Story

Children might enjoy writing a story about an adventure the Crackers club has. Encourage them to plan a mystery plot that the two detectives (and Mudge) can solve. They can write up their mystery as a story. Collect the stories in a Crackers Club Anthology.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Codes Online

Have children use the keywords "secret codes" for kids to find secret codes on the Internet. When they find one they can use and understand, ask them to copy it down and write a message using it. The rest of the class can try to crack the code message.