Specific Curriculum SKILLS Connections with
Enigma: A Magical Mystery (Graeme Base)

A variety of skills across the curriculum may be developed as learners encounter, read, and decipher this book. ALL may be correlated with the State Standards. See the following three-page article by Lizzie Chase about using this book with OLDER learners. DON’T MISS THIS if you are involved with post-primary students. Below are some additional specific examples of curriculum connections (for all ages) with this book:

VISUAL DISCRIMINATION. The most obvious skill that parallels the FUN of this book is “fine” visual discrimination (for ALL ages). The searching for the “hidden” items requires a great deal of concentration and discernment. Adult leaders may encourage this skill according to the needs of the individual learner. This book was illustrated for the purpose of “locating” the following items:

- The magician’s missing items (beginning with pages 8-9). Each double page has one hidden item. An answer page is provided later in this packet.
- The NINE paw prints camouflaged on each double page. (An answer key is provided on a later page.)
- A missing rabbit (or portion of one) hidden on each double page.
- The author’s signature that may be found somewhere on each double page.

CODE COMPREHENSION AND INTERPRETATION. Deciphering an alphabet code is not only a visual discrimination skill, but it is additionally one of comprehension of details (and matching). As students engage in decoding the messages, these skills may be enhanced. Students could also create their own alphabet codes and write a coded sentence to a friend.

SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS (MAPS). On one of the back flaps is the code for the hometowns and countries for each of the ten characters in this story. Students may decipher the code and figure out where these hometowns are located. To benefit the adult educator, there are four ready-to-use pages provided for this skill, with three different skill levels. They are as follows:

- **World Map (1):** This is the toughest of the three map challenges. Students must decipher the code for the hometowns/countries and then identify their positions on the world map.
- **World Map (2):** This is a tad easier than the above. A list of the ten hometowns/countries are provided, and students are asked to identify their positions on the world map.
- **World Map (3):** This is the easiest of all (but still not “easy”). The ten hometowns/countries are written on the page, and there are DOTS to show where the ten are located. Students are asked to write the NUMBER of the place by the dots that represent their positions on the world map. (Note that these dots are CLOSE to the hometown. The design of the map prevented the exact positioning in some cases.)
- **World Map – ANSWERS:** This final map is the answer key to any of the above three.

After the above has been accomplished, look back on each of the pages to see what visual clues there are for each of the hometowns/countries. Students will soon discover that there are many correlations in Base’s artwork that “hint” of the cultures of the ten characters. Discussions could occur about what additional items could have been added.
SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS (WORLD WAR II CONNECTIONS). Some writers have suggested that Graeme Base’s inspiration for this book was the actual Enigma Machine used for sending secret messages during World War II. Two related articles are provided that explain this machine and its use during the war. Both are for general interest and can easily be correlated with the social studies curriculum for OLDER learners. The first of the two provided articles explain the machine and its use during the war. The second of the two is simply a shorter and more succinct article. The article in the MATH section relates to this same machine. [Some information overlaps.]

MATH SKILLS. Continuing with the above concept of the Enigma Machine that was used during World War II, an article is provided that explains how this machine can be of interest to those involved in higher mathematics.

SCIENCE SKILLS. Numerous animals are mentioned/illustrated in this book. Students could identify and describe those with which they are familiar, and they could learn more about those with which they are less familiar. Examine the science text for each grade level to identify any specific animal connections.

READING/LITERATURE/LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS. Practically ALL of the language arts skills may be enhanced with the use of this book. The following are some suggestions:

- **Vocabulary:** See the activities in a later section for vocabulary correlations.
- **Oral Language:** Retelling of the story (or segments) could enhance oral language skills. (See the article by Lizzie Chase for additional suggestions.)
- **Poetic Skills:** Graeme Base typically selects the metrical foot of iambic heptameter for his books (as he did with this one). This type of metrical foot could be studied, and attempts to replicate it could be made. An iambic foot of poetry consists of one “weak” (unstressed) syllable, followed by one “strong” (stressed) syllable. A line of heptameter consists of seven of these metrical feet. An example is: “His magic wand lay idle on the bookshelf by the door” [the first line on page 4]. When read with emphases on the stressed syllables, it might be: “His MAG-ic WAND l ay I-dle ON the BOOK-shelf BY the DOOR.” Heaven forbid that we SHOULD read it this way, but by doing so for sample lines, this style of metrical foot can easily be demonstrated. Students could (individually or in small groups) create a response to Bertie or Enigma about their reactions to this story.
- **Literature Skills:** A study of this book and the life of the author can be closely correlated with the literature curriculum of any grade. Information about the author (and his hometown) is provided in a later section.

ART SKILLS. After fully experiencing this book, any interested student could attempt to prepare an illustration in which something is HIDDEN. Expect these “drawings” to vary greatly in talent and in the ability of others to identify the item(s) that are hidden.

OTHERS. As you explore the genius behind this book, you will surely discover many, many additional ways that learners of all ages could enhance the curriculum through related thoughts, discussions, and activities. Have FUN with all of it!
Beyond the review: *Enigma: a magical mystery* by Graeme Base

_A s with all of Graeme Base’s picture books, Enigma: a magical mystery is about paying attention and the magic that happens when we take notice of what is right in front of our eyes, and what has been previously hidden from our view. For younger students, the delight will lie in searching out the rabbit, Enigma, his paw prints and the lost magical props which Bertie Badger seeks to find for his grandfather and friends in the Retirement Home for Elderly Magicians. For older students, this book provides a wonderful starting point for discussing the concept of perspectives and the fact that people see the world in different ways. By using some of the analytical tools that visual literacy provides, it is easy to tease out the meaning of the cultural allusions which appear on every page. These tools will also highlight the way in which different perspectives are conveyed through the magicians’ gestures, costumes, and each magician’s relative size and positioning with regard to Bertie. The magician’s eyes express many emotions and the way in which their gaze is directed has much to say about relationships and states of mind. At times, eyes reveal inner states, which is a visual equivalent to the literary interior monologue. At other times, eyes are locked in a gaze while characters engage in conversation, or they look out to the reader in a knowing way which invites the reader to experience the story with them._

**In and out of the frame**

As readers, the frame on each page invites us into an active relationship with the characters and their adventures. Although we mostly watch the action from outside the frame, with the characters unaware of our presence, there are four notable exceptions. When we first meet Bertie and his Grandpa, they gaze at us intently – it is a snapshot moment and we are the implied photographers. The monkey in the Monkey House looks directly at us and gestures to us to join the action, while Miss Poodle mimics her charade out towards us and Mistress Hypnosis sends her doleful gaze our way.

**Allusion and magic**

Not just a visual feast, this is a book to be read aloud, with a strong rhythm and sumptuous language celebrating the experiences and travels of the retired magicians. We find that each magician’s room is a distinct cultural landscape because their experiences have enriched their lives and memories so much. This provides an opportunity to discuss the role of artefacts to swiftly convey cultural stereotypes and the way in which a nostalgic atmosphere can be evoked through physical settings which also reveal states of mind. Each magician’s double page spread has its own chain of words relating to magic and to their past, which heighten the evocative impact of the images. Magic shows rely on secret knowledge and to their past, and these character-specific descriptions heighten the evocative impact of the images. Magic shows rely on secret knowledge to their past, and these character-specific descriptions heighten the evocative impact of the images. Magic shows rely on secret knowledge and the fact that audiences are tantalised, and encouraging their gifts.

**Beyond the review...**

The resource review program supports teacher librarians and teachers in the selection and effective use of resources. Lizzie Chase, Review Coordinator, School Libraries and Information Literacy, suggests teaching and learning ideas for a resource which is reviewed in this issue.

**A magical reading experience**

To read this book is to know implicitly that the world is richer when we learn from other cultures and when we listen to other people’s stories. It is richer when children can spend time with grandparents to learn from them and to hear about a world which may be vanishing. Being alive is a wonderful initiation process into different ways of seeing. However, the deepest magic comes from having a dream and communicating it, and from treasuring those around us, calling them by name and encouraging their gifts. Bertie becomes part of this deep magic when he shares what he knows. Magic can happen now because, without
Enigma: a magical mystery Middle Years picture book study: suggested activities

1. Connect

Concept
What is an enigma? Is it always solved? Is asking questions more important?
Think about life’s mysteries and ask the big questions you’ve always wanted answers to...

Themes
The deepest magic happens in our hearts. Pay attention and you will see what is hidden from many. Everyone sees the world differently. A little encouragement goes a long way. Have a dream and share it. Have adventures and keep the memories for a lifetime.
What did Enigma learn by the end of the book? What did Grandpa learn? What did Bertie learn?

Feelings
Between two characters OR inside one character. Decide which type of feeling...
Write down each character’s name. Look at their eyes and write down how they feel and why...

Word clouds
Use <www.wordle.net> to make word clouds from the words in each magician’s description. Make a word cloud from all the words which relate to magic in the book.

2. Explore

Picture clues
Find Enigma and nine paw prints in each double page. Find Graeme Base’s signature. Find the hidden magical props. Crack Enigma’s code by using the key.

Interview
Ask a trusted adult/grandparent
Which is the biggest magic of all? What is the greatest treasure in your life?

Research option – written task
What was the Enigma code? Explain why cracking the code in World War II was so important for the Allied forces. Display your work on a poster.

Research option – preparatory investigations
Look up and practise new magic tricks.
Look up and learn some new riddles.
<www.azkidssite.com/riddles.htm>
Add a magician to the story. Research the architecture, animals, costumes and objects found in this magician’s country.

[Table 2 offers programming ideas for the research tasks highlighted above.]

3. Generate

Treasure hunt - code plus key
Write your own code to explain where something has been hidden in the classroom and provide a key so that your friends can solve the mystery.

Cultural landscape representation
Using word and inserting images, create a cultural landscape to depict iconic architecture, animal, costumes and objects in the country you researched. Choose a tone – admiring or humorous – and use size, object distortion and positioning to convey it.

Digital story options: becoming known
A. Sometimes I feel invisible when
B. My favourite times happen when
C. This is what I notice in MY world

Writing to share and display: perspectives
A. Enigma’s postcard to a friend about his show
B. Bertie’s journal entry about his visit and the show
C. Grandpa’s letter to a magician friend.

4. Share [pairs each choose ONE option]

Concluding celebration for this picture book study:
A humorous anecdote
I hypnotised my friend last week...

Walk, look and share
Visit a special part of the school, look around, pay close attention. Back in the classroom, share what different people saw.

Magic show option
Choose your own magician’s name and perform.

Charades
Mime while others guess which part of the book your scene is from

Learn and recite your favourite part of the story

Riddles session
Ask your riddles - others must solve these enigmas.

Table 1 Middle Years picture book study: suggested activities
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<th><strong>Focusing teaching and learning information literacy support: programming ideas for research options</strong></th>
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| **Topic/Unit support:** | Supporting the research lessons in *Enigma: a magical mystery* for a Middle Years picture book study  
**Quality Teaching elements:** Deep knowledge, deep understanding, substantive communication |
| **Resources:** | Internet sites, encyclopedias, non-fiction and *Enigma: a magical mystery* by Graeme Base.  
| **Pre-unit assessment to gauge current level of understanding:** | (in terms of unit/topic/focus)  
eg pre-test, teacher judgment, brainstorm, discussion questions prior to unit study  
Students have previously read *Enigma: a magical mystery* and have responded to its major concepts, themes, language and characters’ emotions. They have explored the book’s pictures, responded to the visual clues and cracked Enigma’s code. Before starting their partner work research, they brainstorm their current understandings about cultural stereotypes linked to the country they will research, their knowledge about the original Enigma code and share any riddles or magic tricks they already know. |
| **Syllabus outcomes:** |  
**English K–6**: RS3.7; WS3.9; WS3.12; WS3.13  
**English 7–10**: 4.3; 4.7; 4.9  
**Related computer competencies focus:** Internet searching, word processing, image formatting  
**Related information skills focus area:** Selecting:  
By the end of this unit students will be able to take effective notes from a variety of sources, including internet sites. |
| **Suggested teaching and learning activities/strategies** |  
1. With all students, explicitly revise strategies for effective note making: teach how to summarise, paraphrase and use visual diagramming so that students process the information and do not copy and paste.  
2. Show the students researching the Enigma code the paragraph structure and language features of an explanation, and the layout of an effective poster. Discuss and analyse models together.  
3. Show the students researching cultural icons examples of humorous and admiring tones in visual texts, featuring tourist destinations. Share the metalanguage of visual literacy: layout, positioning, size, colour, stereotypes, expressions, gestures.  
**Planned assessment options – partner work** |  
1. Students create a poster: *Enigma code in World War II*.  
OR  
2. Students create a word document which contains images of cultural icons from a country they have researched. Visual literacy skills are used to create a humorous OR admiring tone.  
OR  
3. Students demonstrate that they have made effective notes about new magic tricks.  
OR  
4. Students search for new riddles, using appropriate search term and using menu effectively. |
| **Literature links:** | *Enigma: a magical mystery* – Middle Years picture book study  
| **Post unit assessment to determine progress towards stated outcomes** | (eg post-test, guided evaluation sheet, skills achieved in context of outcomes (indicators) and planned assessment)  
In addition to being assessed on their Enigma code explanation posters or cultural landscape representation, students could also demonstrate their magic skills tricks or riddling skills at the end of unit celebration. |

*Table 2 Programming ideas for research tasks*
What Other Professionals Say about the Use of Enigma

In today’s world of technology, it’s easy to discover what OTHERS think about practically ANYTHING. Although YOU can also Google these opinions, I decided to share a couple with you:

Posted by Kim Wheedleton

For Teachers and Librarians: Little guys love magic, and Enigma: A Magical Mystery will be great fun for them. Older kids thrill in trying to solve mysteries, and Enigma is full of clues, hints, mystery, and code. As is usual in a Graeme Base book, have your students look closely at the colorful and detailed pictures for the hidden clues and interesting goings-on shoehorned into each and every page. This is a great book to use with a mystery unit: have kids identify the components of a mystery story; let them keep detective booklets to keep track of all the possible clues they find within, both in text and pictures; have them create a list of questions to ask the theft victims, then let them play parts and act out their questioning; create a class chart to keep track of the clues they find on their own, discussing how they think the clues will or won’t help solve the mystery; have them come up with possible solutions to the mystery and back up their positions. Use the letter at the end of the book to crack the code and discover the hiding places of each item. You can use this book to fit curriculum in a variety of ways: reading genre (mystery), analytical thinking, math (code), deductive reasoning (figuring out the clues), poetry (the story is in verse), rhyming pairs and phonics, art appreciation (color schemes used in each scene, pictures hidden in the illustrations), components of magic shows (the various methods of magic performers employ)...and so much more. But most of all, use this book to let your kids have fun with a story, and enjoy reading or having it read to them.

For Parents, Grandparents and Caregivers: Enigma: A Magical Mystery is the perfect book to get you and your kiddos involved in a sweet story, and have fun activities to do as well. The story portrays a great example of how a kid can be helpful, shows a positive family relationship, provides a priceless opportunity for you and the kids to bend heads over the book and eagerly search for hidden pictures and clues, and will get you working together to break a code and solve a mystery. With beautiful illustrations, a fun story told in rhyme, and an opportunity for family togetherness, what’s not to like?

For the Kids: Do you love finding clues and solving mysteries? Do you think it’s fun to find hidden pictures and solve codes? Do you think magic is totally cool? If so, then Enigma: A Magical Mystery is the book for you! Bertie Badger’s grandpa is a retired magician, but he still does shows for Bertie. One day, Grandpa’s magical props go missing - and so does his magical bunny rabbit. Will Bertie be able to find them? Can he figure out who took everything? You will find clues in the pictures, and can help find the missing props by solving a secret code. The author and illustrator, Graeme Base, has even hidden little pictures within each big picture for you to have fun searching and finding! What are you waiting for? Go find this book!

Wrapping Up: Enigma: A Magical Mystery is a warm and fuzzy story packed with magic, mystery, hidden pictures, and a secret code. It’s a book sure to be a favorite with the kids, and a great addition to anyone’s Graeme Base book collection.

Posted by Terry C. Johnston (Woodland, Calif.)

This is a very popular book with our children in our school, both girls and boys. They love the codes in the back of the book. Even our 6th graders ask for this book.

By S. Whittaker (Anchorage, AK)

Graeme Base is easily my favorite children’s book author/illustrator, and Enigma provided my daughter’s 3/4th grade combo class one of the most delightful hours of the entire school year! I purchased 3 copies of the book so all the kids could be close enough to see the beautifully detailed illustrations, made 25 copies of the coded message and the key, then went in and read the book to the class one morning. Afterwards, the class broke up into groups of 4 and began deciphering the coded messages, passing the 3 books among the groups to find the hidden objects where the decoded messages said they would be. It was a race to the finish, and I easily had as much fun as the kids did! Graeme, you’re an absolute treasure! After you fall in love with Enigma, make sure you also grab The Discovery of Dragons and, best of all, The Worst Band in the Universe. (I’ve been known to read that one even without kids around!)