

Puzzling Messages

NOVA Activity **Secrets, Lies, and AtomicSpies**

During World War II and the Cold War, the intelligence agencies of Great Britain and the United States gathered people together for the purpose of breaking the codes of other nations. These people were good with languages, crossword puzzles, chess, word scrambles, mathematics problems, and other puzzles. Good memories, broad vocabularies, and wide-ranging interests were also important. Do you have the "right stuff" to break a secret code? Try this activity and see.

Procedure

Part I

- ① You have received information that the following code is somehow directly related to its name, 1245.
- ② First unscramble the words below. Then look at the unscrambled words in relation to the code name, 1245, to help you determine the rules governing this code.

1245 Code

OTDYA IEGTH HSISP ELAEV PSANI

Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- ① What does this message say?
- ② What are the rules governing this code?

Part II

- ① Your supervisors were so happy with your code-breaking skills that they've assigned you to break this new message that has just come in. The only information you have about it is that the same group of people who coded the previous message coded it.
- ② Apply what you learned about the rules governing the 1245 Code to this code in order to break it.

132547 Code

EHFARWS ROTDENC SREONSE LNFOFEI
IWNYMAD LNIØSDA

Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- ① What does this message say?
- ② What are the rules governing this code?
- ③ What are the differences between the first and second code?
- ④ How did you go about breaking the code? What steps did you take? What strategies did you use? What skills were important?

