

TALKING POINTS

CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2013



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

Code Name Verity

by Elizabeth Wein

Title

- Talk about the title of Code Name Verity. What does the name 'Verity' mean? Why do you think this was chosen as the title?

Julie

- The book starts with Julie declaring, 'I am a coward'. Do you think this is true? What signs do we get during the book that Julie is weak or cowardly and what evidence do we have that she is brave or heroic?
- What kind of person do you think Julie is, and what are you basing your opinion on? How do we get an impression of her through her writing style?
- Julie describes her torture in a very candid way. How did you feel reading about the treatment that she and the other inmates were subjected to? Do you think that the writing style makes a difference to how we feel when we read it?
- At several points during the book, Julie gets annoyed at being referred to as the English captive – why?
- Why do you think Julie chooses to write about Maddie at first, and introduce herself as a character in the third person? Can you think of any point at the story where she explains this choice a little? Did you realise that she was 'Queenie'?
- The other prisoners feel extreme animosity towards Julie – why? How do you think this makes Julie feel?
- Think about Julie's ability to take on different personalities and aliases. How do you think that this helps her during the novel? Talk about the various 'characters' she takes on – how are they similar or different?
- How did you feel when you found out Julie also worked as an interrogator?
- Does your opinion of Julie change over the course of the book? If yes, in what way?
- Why do you think Julie includes the made up story about the aunt who had to shoot the uncle?
- Julie ends her story by repeating, 'I have told the truth' over and over. Has she?

Maddie

- As a female pilot, Maddie is unusual. Do some research into the typical roles of women during World War 2.
- Maddie and Julie have very different backgrounds. Why do you think they become friends? Do you think they would have become friends in a non-war situation?
- What is Maddie's relationship with Jamie?
- How do you think Maddie feels about Anna Engel?



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- Why does Maddie often say to herself, 'Fly the plane, Maddie'? Talk about mantras – what would your personal mantra be?
- Why does Maddie choose to kill Julie?
- Do you think Julie's great aunt knows it is her great niece? If not, what does she mean when she says, 'We share a terrible burden, chérie. We are alike'?

Von Linden

- What do you think about the character of SS-Hauptsturmführer Amadeus von Linden?
- Why do you think he allows Julie time to write her story?
- Does he have any redeeming qualities?

Cowardice or bravery?

Think about the following characters, and talk about the ways in which they show bravery or cowardice during the book:

- Julie
- Maddie
- Anna Engel
- Von Linden
- The various members of the Resistance
- Marie, the French prisoner

Look at the lists of fears that Julie and Maddie initially swap. Both girls later make updated lists of fears.

- What do their first lists tell us about each of the young women?
- What do the updated lists reflect about the personal journeys they have been on during the novel?
- In what way do the lists show differences or similarities between the friends?

People are complicated

Julie says, 'People are complicated. There is so much more to everybody than you realise.' and goes on to give examples of how people interact on a surface level but don't share their deep fears or dreams.

- What do you think are the complicated or hidden areas to each of the main characters in the book – i.e. the things that they may worry about or dream about?
- Do you think Julie and Maddie's relationship is complicated or simple?

- Did you notice the underlined sections in the story that Julie is writing? What did you think that they meant?
- When you were reading Julie's half of the story, did you have any idea that she was making up the name places and other details, such as Anna Engel's role?
- Why did you think that Julie was writing this 'memoir'? Why did you think she was so desperate to finish it?
- When the American radio interviewer says she's 'looking for verity', did you realise that she was a double agent?
- Talk about the code that Julie and the interviewer use, both in terms of the information that we later find that Julie has conveyed to her, and the simple code that they use by missing out words in sentences (i.e. 'You're not - ?')

Quotes and references

- What do you think of the quote by Edith Cavell, 'Patriotism is not enough – I must have no hatred or bitterness for anyone'?
- Throughout the book there are frequent references to Peter Pan, such as Jamie being Peter Pan, the lost boys, Julie's mother being Mrs Darling and leaving the windows open. How do you think that these references relate to the text? What do they add to what we feel or know as we read the book?
- Why does Julie write Scots poetry at one point? Look especially at the Auld Lang Syne lyrics.
- Look up the, 'Kiss me, Hardy' reference. Why do you think Julie wants these to be her last words?

Further reading

- *Between Shades of Grey* by Ruta Sepetys
- *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
- *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

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