

Harriet Spies Again

Written by [Louise Fitzhugh](#) and [Helen Ericson](#)

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TEACHERS GUIDE

NOTE TO TEACHERS

The beloved classic, *Harriet the Spy*, is now joined by a new adventure, *Harriet Spies Again*, which perfectly captures the narrative voice, wit, and charm of Louise Fitzhugh's original novels and characters. Written by a longtime admirer of Harriet, this new novel includes life issues as common to today's readers as they were when the first novel was published.

This guide offers discussion questions and provides activities that link these novels to language arts, social studies, art, home arts, and careers.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Harriet books feature a precocious 11-year-old who uses her extraordinary talent of observing to capture people and events from her life for stories that she wants to write someday.

Eleven-year-old Harriet M. Welsch, the only child of a wealthy family, lives in New York City where she attends a private school and keeps track of the people and events in her neighborhood on her spy route. She is intelligent and curious; qualities strongly encouraged by Ole Golly, her attentive live-in nanny. Harriet's ambition is to become a spy or a writer, so she records all of her observations—including some awful things about her classmates—in her private notebook. When her notebook gets into the wrong hands, the question becomes whether Harriet can regain the trust of her friends.

The Long Secret, Sport, and the new *Harriet Spies Again* continue the adventures begun in *Harriet the Spy*, and celebrate Harriet's curiosity as she interacts with family and friends.

ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Louise Fitzhugh was born in Memphis, Tennessee. She attended Bard College, then studied art in Italy and France. She continued her studies in New York at the Art Students League and the Cooper Union. Her books *Harriet the Spy*, *The Long Secret*, and *Sport* have been acclaimed as milestones of children's literature. These classics delight readers year after year.

Helen Ericson was introduced to Harriet M. Welsch in 1964 when she was 9 years old. A passionate fan of *Harriet the Spy*, she was elated when the estate of Louise Fitzhugh granted her and Delacorte Press permission to continue Harriet's story in a companion book. She is a journalist living in the Midwest with two daughters and a son.

TEACHING IDEAS

Pre-Reading Activity

Engage the class in a discussion about the art of spying. What personality traits must a spy possess? Discuss the dangers that one may encounter while spying. Ask the class to think about the difference between spying and being nosy.

Today we use technology such as computer search engines and cellular phones. Explain that the first three books about Harriet were written before most of these technological advances. What research techniques did Harriet use before these advances? How does modern technology help spies do their work today?

Spying on Harriet and Her Friends

Questions for Group Discussion

- In *Harriet the Spy*, Sport says, "My father says you have to catch the reader's attention right at first and then hold it." (p. 89) How does Fitzhugh capture the reader's attention in the first chapter? Discuss whether the three companion novels capture the reader's attention in the same way.

- Contrast Harriet's relationship with her family to Sport's and Beth Ellen's relationships with their families. Neither Sport nor Beth Ellen has a mother at home. Discuss how Mrs. Welsch is both present and absent in Harriet's life.
- In *The Long Secret*, Beth Ellen's grandmother tells her that she may not like her mother, but she will admire her. Discuss the difference between liking someone and admiring them. What is there to admire about Beth Ellen's mother? Whom do you admire?
- Who do you think knows Harriet better, Ole Golly or Harriet's parents? What does Harriet mean when she says Ole Golly "made herself felt in the house"? (p. 136, *Harriet the Spy*) What does Harriet miss most about Ole Golly when she leaves? Who do you think knows you best? Whom do you know best?
- Mr. and Mrs. Welsch fire Ole Golly when she goes on a date with Mr. Waldenstein and takes Harriet with her. Discuss why Harriet's parents feel that Ole Golly's behavior is "outlandish." Explain why Mrs. Welsch changes her mind and says, "You can't leave. What would we do without you?" (p. 128, *Harriet the Spy*) Why does Ole Golly feel that the time has come for her to leave?
- In *Harriet Spies Again*, a new character is introduced. Annie Smith is a challenge to Harriet. Discuss what Harriet feels a friend should be and why Annie Smith is so complicated for Harriet to understand. In *Harriet Spies Again*, Sport tells Harriet he likes a girl. Does this change his friendship with Harriet? Why or why not?
- Ole Golly says to Harriet, "Life is a struggle and a good spy gets in there and fights." (p. 132, *Harriet the Spy*) How does Harriet need this advice when *The Spy Catcher Club* turns on her?
- Harriet knows Ole Golly as stern and uncompromising, qualities that make Harriet "comfortable." Discuss whether Harriet feels as comfortable with Ole Golly when she returns from Canada in *Harriet Spies Again*.

- Discuss what Ole Golly means when she tells Harriet, “I guard my memories and love them, but I don’t get in them and lie down.” (p. 31, *Harriet Spies Again*). What do you think Harriet’s fondest memories of Ole Golly will be?
- In *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet hates it when Ole Golly tells her that she isn’t thinking. Discuss how Harriet has matured because she realizes that she must do something for Ole Golly. Why is the ability to think essential for a good spy?
- How would you define prejudice? Talk about the different types of prejudice expressed in *Sport*. Discuss *Sport*’s reaction to his mother’s statement about people who are of Jewish, African American, and Hispanic backgrounds. What are some ways to handle a person who makes a prejudiced statement about a cultural group in your presence? What types of prejudice have you encountered in your own world? In the news today?
- In *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet says, “Something is definitely happening to me. I am changing.” (p. 241) Trace the changes in Harriet, *Sport*, and Beth Ellen from the time they first appear in *Harriet the Spy* through the three companion novels.

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts—Some writers provide titles for each chapter in a novel, but Louise Fitzhugh only numbers the chapters in her books. Ask students to make appropriate chapter titles for one or more of the novels and discuss their choices. Harriet does not like the children’s programs on television. Make a “TV Guide” for Harriet, listing the shows she might enjoy. Briefly describe each show. Explain the program choices to the class.

Social Studies—In *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet plays Town, a game that she created. She observes people and assigns them a profession in her town. Ask students to brainstorm the many professions it takes to run a town. Group the professions into categories: health, education, law enforcement, retail merchandising, etc. Instruct the students to create a governing body for their town. How will this body be elected? *Sport*’s grandfather dies and leaves his fortune to *Sport*. *Sport*’s mother kidnaps him for his money. Ask the class to research the details of a

court trial. Then have the class put Sport's mother on trial. Appoint students to the following roles: Sport's mother, Sport, Sport's father, a judge, a jury, witnesses, a defense lawyer, and a prosecuting lawyer. Art–In Harriet Spies Again, Harriet makes a time line of her life, using one sheet of paper for each year. Have each student make an illustrated time line of their own life.

Home Arts–In Harriet the Spy, Ole Golly quotes Henry James: "There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea." (p. 18) Assign groups to research tea ceremonies (i.e., British high tea or Japanese tea) and plan an afternoon tea that Ole Golly might host for Harriet's friends. Careers–Harriet's school has a Career Day, and Harriet writes a report on the world of espionage. Harriet thinks she wants to be a spy, a writer, or a philanthropist. Ask students what they want to be when they are older. Have them research their top three career choices. What do these careers have in common?

VOCABULARY

Louise Fitzhugh challenges even the most precocious reader to think about words and their meanings. Ask students to write down unfamiliar words and attempt to define them by taking clues from the context of the story. Such words may include (from Harriet Spies Again) surreptitiously (p. 5), interlude (p. 5), expunge (p. 26), voluminous (p. 60), surveillance (p. 74), meticulous (p. 77), rapprochement (p. 95), adroit (p. 100), impugn (p. 149), lissome (p. 208), and prudent (p. 242); (from Harriet the Spy) obnoxious (p. 22), infinite (p. 45), pompously (p. 50), vantage (p. 53), iniquity (p. 60), colloquy (p. 82), complacency (p. 85), enigma (p. 113), impudence (p. 151), querulous (p. 172), and copious (p. 290); (from The Long Secret) idiocy (p. 23), fanatic (p. 51), convoluted (p. 55), quixotic (p. 60), and chagrined (p. 94); (from Sport) erratically (p. 8), morose (p. 77), beneficiary (p. 81), residual (p. 82), barbaric (p. 100), and ruthless (p. 207).