

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

with BONUS Digital & Printable Activities

The Mysterious Virginia Hall, World War II's Most Dangerous Spy

Written by Claudia Friddell

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Ages: 12 and up
Grades: 7 and up

Download all printables [here](#)

Guide and Activities created by
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Virginia Hall, known to her family as “Dindy,” was an athletic, outdoorsy girl who dreamed of joining the foreign service and becoming an ambassador. Despite numerous setbacks, including losing her leg to gangrene after an accident, Virginia never wavered in her determination to serve her country. After the outbreak of World War II, a chance meeting on a train changed her life—George Bellows, an agent of the British Special Operations Executive, recruited her as one of its first women agents. Working for Allied intelligence services in France, Virginia Hall organized French resistance fighters, performed daring rescues, and provided the Allies with intelligence that was key for ousting the Nazis and earned her numerous medals, including the US Army’s Distinguished Service Cross.

This book takes readers through the extraordinary life of Virginia Hall and her evolution as a resistance fighter and intelligence operative. Award-winning author Claudia Friddell brings Virginia Hall’s bravery, intelligence, and determination to life in this thoroughly researched and photo-filled biography endorsed by Hall’s family.

 **ASTRA BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS**

©2025 Classroom Guide for Claudia Friddell’s *The Mysterious Virginia Hall*


CALKINS CREEK

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PRAISE FOR THE MYSTERIOUS VIRGINIA HALL

"Traces the exciting life of a pioneering spy who became the CIA's first tenured woman officer... the short chapters, plentiful photos, and ample white space makes this inviting to readers overwhelmed by dense text... a satisfying introduction to a remarkable woman's influential contributions to espionage." — **Kirkus Reviews**

"Friddell's love letter to a lesser-known WWII spy presents an impressive true story in an inviting format... A riveting exploration of Virginia Hall's life and work, especially her undercover escapades, told with as much ease and enjoyment as a wartime spy mystery." — **Booklist**

"This inspiring tale of courage, intelligence, and determination introduces Virginia Hall, one of history's most remarkable, but relatively unknown, heroes... This biography is a good addition to a secondary school's biography collection. Readers who enjoy stories of bravery, espionage, and strong female figures will find Hall's story both thrilling and inspiring." — **School Library Journal**

"I enjoyed sharing information about my Aunt Dindy with Claudia and am pleased with the result. It's a great read!" — **Lorna Catling, Virginia Hall's niece**

"Early in Claudia's book, I found myself saying 'Wow!' after nearly every page. How was this possible? I have heard (and told) Dindy's story hundreds of times, but this book made the story feel fresh and new. After I finished *The Mysterious Virginia Hall*, I realized I had been taken on a world-wide magic carpet-like journey with a hundred mind-boggling stops along the way. My advice, dear reader, is to board this magic carpet but to fly it slowly. There is much to see, and you won't want to miss a thing!" — **Brad Catling, Virginia Hall's great-nephew**

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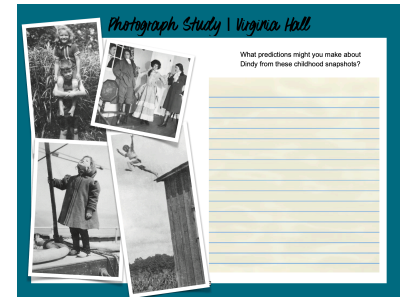
PRE-READING:

1) Show class the cover of *The Mysterious Virginia Hall*. Does she look like a spy? Why or why not?



2) Look at photos on pages 10, 11, 13, and 16. What predictions might you make about Dindy from these childhood snapshots on the provided PDF? Find and share 2-4 photos of you as a young child and tell how they show something important about your life or interests now. Full size PDF included at the end of document.

3) Make a (individual or class) KWL graphic organizer for Virginia Hall based on the title and cover of the book. What do you already know about her and what do you want to know about her? After reading, fill in the last category: what have you learned about her.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Suggestion: Use the TPS (Think, Pair, Share) process for Q's 1, 5, 6, and 7.

Think: individual student reads the following questions, and writes down three thoughts/answers for each.

Pair: partners discuss thoughts, checking the ones in common. Write down any new ideas.

Share in a group: review ideas and circle the one you think is most important. The group chooses an idea to share. Write down 2-3 new ideas you think apply.

1) How do you think Virginia's upbringing and childhood at Boxhorn Farm may have influenced her choices and her ability to overcome obstacles?

2) Virginia was a leader in many different areas (sports, yearbook, plays, student government) at Roland Park Country School, the all-girls school she attended for 12 years. How do you think the experience of not having male classmates may have influenced girls in the early 1900's? How would/does it impact you to go to school with only girls or only boys? Why?

3) Virginia experienced many harrowing situations—a hunting accident, crossing the Pyrenees in the winter with a wooden leg, driving a battlefield ambulance, having a

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house searched by Nazi soldiers. Imagine yourself in one of these situations. What qualities do you have that would help you navigate this experience.

4) How might the availability of Penicillin have changed Virginia's fate following her hunting accident?

5) Virginia Hall refused public recognition of the highest civilian honors from U.S., British, and French governments to protect her identity so she could continue her espionage work. Why do you think she still refused to acknowledge or discuss her spy experiences after she retired from the CIA?

6) What do you most admire about Virginia Hall? If you could meet her, what would you like to ask her?

7) Why do you think the author, Claudia Friddell, chose to write Virginia Hall's story with small text chunks and lots of white spaces?

GROUP ACTIVITIES:

1) Write and act out a scene from The Mysterious Virginia Hall.

2) In pairs or small groups, students choose a scene from Virginia's life and describes it to their group as if Virginia is explaining it to grandchildren.

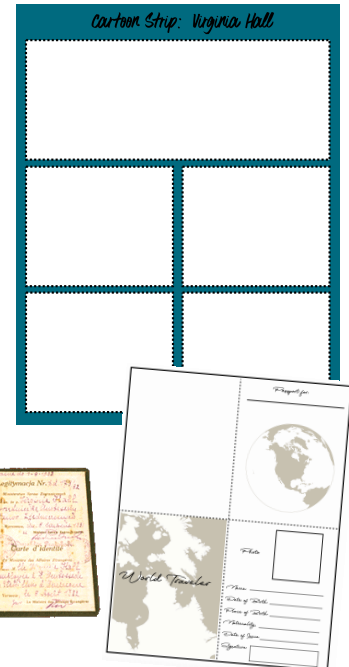


3) Make a class list of important events in Virginia's life. Students working in pairs or small groups will write/draw cartoon strips → depicting the events.

The class will sequence them to make a short graphic novel. A full size printable is provided at the end of this document.



4) Check out this image of one of Virginia Hall's passports. Use the template provided at the end of this document to create a passport of Virginia's life from *before* she was a spy (before 1941)! The endpapers will help!



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- 5) Make a class quilt with each square representing an important event in Virginia's life.
- 6) Radio Show: Most people during WW II received important news by newspaper and radio broadcasts. Listen to this short clip of Eleanor Roosevelt's Pearl Harbor attack broadcast:



- 7) Choose a major national or world event from the book (ex: The 1929 Stock market crash, D Day, etc.) Research, write, and/or use digital tools to give your own radio broadcast announcing this event to your class.



- 8) Make a flip book of Virginia's code names and her accomplishments with each spy identity. (A full size template is included at the end of this document) ➔



- 9) Use your imagination... you are shopping in an antiques market or second hand store and you find an artifact that previously belonged to Virginia Hall. What would it be? Working in small groups (no more than seven groups total) describe its importance and take a photo of an artifact like it to display. Example: a broach

Some of the many Code Names of <i>Virginia Hall</i>

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(decorative pin) with a design unique to Virginia's life. Students will be assigned a google slide on which to share the name of their artifact, a description, and a photo or video. Once completed the Virtual Spy Artifact Museum slideshow can be shared with the class. Alternatively you could display students' (imagined) artifacts with a museum-like description in your classroom, and invite others to tour the artifacts in your classroom "museum". Teacher copy of the museum slideshow [here](#).

10) Wax Museum: Each student will represent a different character (including various Virginia Hall spy identities) from the book. Research and write a short script explaining their importance and relationship to Virginia Hall, and dress in costume for a wax museum event where each character comes to life and recites their script.

11) Make a Virginia Hall board game or Jeopardy game (Free templates available online). Examples of categories: Dindy's Childhood, Set Backs, Danger!, Discomforts, Disappearing Acts, Disguises.

12) Americans back home wanted to support the troops. Make a poster, write a newspaper article, or give an interview about *Victory Gardens* or *Scrap for Victory* efforts.

RESEARCH/PROJECT IDEAS:

1) Research a song, movie, or book that was popular during the 1920's. Choose one you think Virginia would have liked and explain why.

2) Research and write about another woman with a disability who overcame discrimination to make important contributions.

3) What is the difference between a primary and secondary source? Choose one of each from the book (including back matter), and explain why it is. Include image of photo or document if used. Describe the source using the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, why).

4) To better understand some of the civic responsibilities Americans shared during the war, choose one of these to research: war bonds, resource conservation, victory gardens, scrap drives (Salvage for Victory), USO, Red Cross.

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- 5) Check out this National Archives website on Virginia Hall: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/explore-the-collection/stories/virginia-hall/>. Find 2 primary sources, (1 photo and 1 document) and write a descriptive caption for each.
- 6) Investigate one of these unsung heroes of World War II: Code Breakers, Navajo Code Talkers, Tuskegee Airmen, Six Triple Eight

VOCABULARY:

maverick	liberty	Depression	elusive	prosthetic	dictator
consulate	Fascism	tyrant	passeur	curfew	liaison
Democracy	diplomat	armistice	beacon	gondola	courier
agent	guerrilla	sabotage	delirious	maquis	discrimination
intelligence	puppet	resistance	sympathizer	Heckler	Cuthbert

- 1) Choose a word and write an acrostic poem.
- 2) Make a crossword puzzle with these words.
- 3) Choose 5 words and write each in a sentence that connects it to Virginia's life.
- 4) Memory Game: These words have more than one meaning: sympathizer, intelligence, 'puppet', resistance, beacon, agent, Depression. Write two definition cards for each. Make sure one of the definitions relates to war or spy terminology. Make a matching memory game with these cards.

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RELATABLE RESEARCH:

How do these people/historical events connect with Virginia Hall's life? Have students choose one from each column below and write a paragraph about how they are connected.

People and Organizations	Events and Related History
Josephine Baker	D Day
Philippe Petain	Operation Torch
World War II ambulance drivers	Pearl Harbor attack
The Gestapo	Stock Market crash of 1929
Winston Churchill	The Blitz/air raid shelters
The Gestapo	Les Annees Folles
President Franklin D Roosevelt	History of prosthetics
The SOE	History of penicillin
Rise of Hitler or Mussolini	History of French and American Alliances
The OSS	Wireless radios in WW II
CIA	The Occupied/Free Zones of WW II France
Maquis	French Resistance

For example, if someone chose "Wireless Radios in WWII" they could share an image of Virginia Hall's suitcase radio (Spy Museum), give history and description of how they worked, and what dangers they presented, etc.

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IF LIFE WAS DIFFERENT:

Choose one of these events/experiences in Virginia's life and re-write her story following the event you choose:

- Her leg heals following the hunting accident
- She passes the state department entrance exams
- Her guide discovers she has a prosthetic leg during the Pyrenees Mountain crossing
- The wireless radio is found during the farmhouse raid
- Agents Henry and Paul are captured during their parachute arrival in Central France

MAP/GEOGRAPHY BASED ACTIVITIES:



Have students match Virginia Hall's many aliases to the regions she visited (France, Spain, etc) and label the locations (with her alias name) on a blank map of Europe. PDF of blank map included at the end of this document.



Use the end papers of the book to label all of the important French locations in this story, including the free and occupied zones and draw the boundary line. Put the number under the location name. A full sized PDF of the World of Virginia Hall map as well as an enlarged map of France can be found at the end of this document. Color all of the ALLIED countries blue and the AXIS countries orange.



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DECODE THIS:

Decode This! Virginia Hall

A cipher is a secret way to write messages. Spies use them to hide important information. A Caesar Cipher shifts letters by a certain number. Symbol substitution is another method, where symbols are used to replace letters and words. Decode the messages below in the boxes and answer the questions within each box

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
			A																						

Instructions: Shift each letter backward three letters to reveal the secret message (for example, d = a)

SFIIX ABP YLFP

What happened here and why is it lucky that Virginia wasn't there?

Instructions: Use the same cipher above to change Virginia's warning message into code:

Wolves at the door.

What is the meaning of this coded message that Virginia Hall sent to London?

★ ★

A PDF of this printable can be found at the end of this document

CHARACTER 3-2-1:

Positive character traits: bravery, honesty, persistence, respect, accountable, dependable, loyal, patient, responsible. Full size PDF can be found at the end of this document.

- Choose 3 traits that you think Virginia Hall possessed.
- Give 2 examples of her demonstrating these traits.
- Choose 1 trait you most admire.

Character 3-2-1 | Virginia Hall

3 Traits that you think Virginia Hall possessed	2 Examples of her demonstrating these traits	1 Trait you most admire

After reading "The Mysterious Virginia Hall: WWII's Most Dangerous Spy" think of some character traits that Virginia Hall possessed (examples: bravery, persistence, respect, accountable, dependable, loyal, patient, responsible) list THREE traits that you think she possessed in column 1, then in column 2 list examples of how she exemplifies these traits. In column 3 list the trait you admire most and explain.

★ ★

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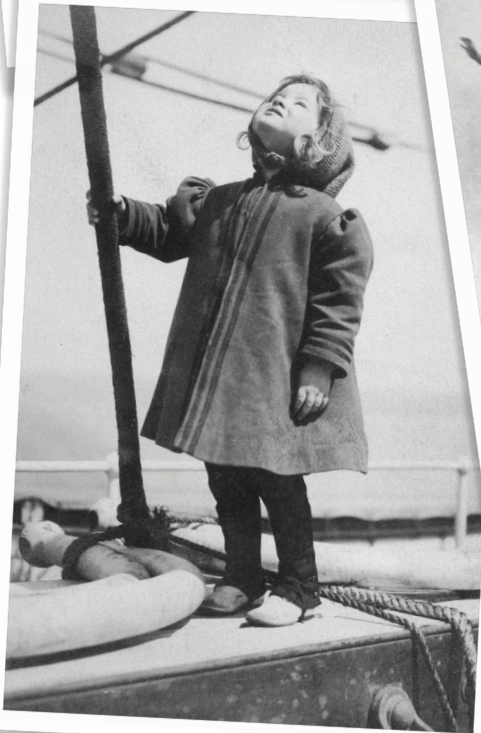
The Mysterious Virginia Hall, World War II's Most Dangerous Spy

APPENDIX:

Full size printables for items denoted with a  Icon are included in the following pages. They include:

- 1 - Photograph Study
- 2 - Cartoon Strip Template
- 3 - Passport Template
- 4 - Flip Book Template
- 5 - Blank map of Europe
- 6 - World of Virginia Hall map
Map of France
- 7 - Decode This (Cipher activity)
- 8 - Character 3-2-1

Photograph Study | Virginia Hall



What predictions might you make about Dindy from these childhood snapshots?

A large rectangular area with horizontal blue lines on a yellow background, intended for writing predictions.

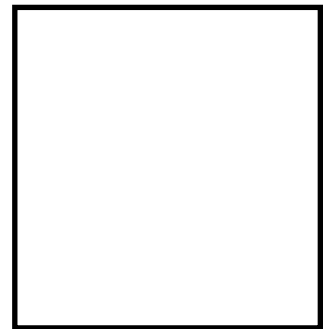
Cartoon Strip: Virginia Hall



Passport for:



Photo



Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Nationality: _____

Date of Issue: _____

Signature: _____







Places I Visited


Places I Visited

Places I Visited

Places I Visited

Some of the many
Code Names of
Virginia Hall







The World of VIRGINIA HALL



- 1 **Parkton, MD**—family summer home, Boxhorn Farm
- 2 **Baltimore, MD**—family apartment
- 3 **Cambridge, MA**—Radcliffe (1924)
- 4 **New York, NY**—Barnard (1925); worked for CIA front, Radio Free Europe offices in Empire State Building (1950)
- 5 **Paris, France**—École Libre des Sciences Politiques (1926); lived for periods during war: (1939), (1940), (1944)
- 6 **Vienna, Austria**—Konsular Akademie (1927)
- 7 **Washington, DC**—George Washington University (1929)
- 8 **Warsaw, Poland**—American embassy (1931–33)
- 9 **Izmir (Smyrna then), Turkey**—American embassy (1933)
- 10 **Venice, Italy**—American consulate (1934–38)
- 11 **Tallinn, Estonia**—American legation (1938–39)

- 12 **London, England**—rejected by ATS; later US code clerk during Blitz (1940); after Pyrenees escape (1943); after Madrid (1943)
- 13 **Metz, France** area—ambulance driver near **Magniot Line** (1940)
- 14 **Loire Valley**—ambulance driver (1940)
- 15 **Vichy, France**—first SOE mission, Operation Geologist 5 (1941)
- 16 **Lyon, France**—Heckler Circuit (1941)
- 17 **Perpignan, France** across **Pyrenees** to **San Juan de las Abadesas, Spain**—(1942)
- 18 **Madrid, Spain**—SOE agent with cover as *Chicago Times* journalist (1943)
- 19 **La Creuse, France**—**Maidou-sur-Crozant** in central France, SOE agent disguised as peasant (1944)
- 20 **Cosne-sur-Loire, Nièvre**—5 hours SE of Paris—essential Maquis trainer and organizer (1944)
- 21 **Sury-en-Vaux, Cher**—disguised as peasant goat herder, invaluable spy in German infested region (1944)
- 22 **Suryes-Bois, Cher**—trained resistance fighters, organized weapons, money, supply air drops (1944)
- 23 **Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, Haute-Loire**—dropped peasant garb, provided invaluable communications, deliveries, commanded 5 companies of 400 men for sabotage missions; lived with Fayol and wife, and bestowed title La Madone by her loyal Maquis soldiers (1944)
- 24 **Barnesville, MD**—Virginia and Paul move to their farm (1959)

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