



Puzzles, Codes, and Mysteries
A Simplify Homeschool Class
Spring 2019
Farrar Williams

Who is this class for:

This class is recommended for students grades 5 through 8. The fiction book is an easy but fun read. The nonfiction book is slightly more difficult, but still intended for middle school aged readers. Students should be able to keep up with the readings and write at least a paragraph independently, or be within the recommended age range and have an accommodation in place to help them do these things. I do not expect students to all be able to solve every puzzle. Therefore, students should be prepared to try and fail at some puzzles and codes. This class may not be a good fit for students who are very easily frustrated.

Subjects and Skills Covered:

This class is interdisciplinary and covers a wide variety of subjects, including literature, history, writing, math, logic, and the science of cryptography. Critical thinking skills is the focus. Students will have an opportunity to try different puzzles and brain teasers every week. They will reflect on their readings and thinking processes in solving problems. They will write their own mysteries, create their own codes, and make their own puzzles.

Types of assignments:

There are two semi-big writing assignments in this class. First, students will complete a very short mini-research paper about a topic of their choosing. Second, students will complete a short story. Every week, there will be three puzzles or codebreaking exercises for students to try. Students get points for trying these and the highest point winner at the end of the class gets a small prize. Students are asked to reflect on their reading with short questions each week. There are hands on activities for them to try at home, such as encrypting messages, making up their own codes, creating their own puzzles, and researching more about the topics in the reading. Students are often given a choice of several assignments and asked to pick one.

Finally, there are optional assignments every week. These include reading questions for students who benefit from reading with specific questions on hand, as well as additional videos and readings pertinent to the topics of the week.

Due Dates and Support:

Assignments are posted on Mondays and due on Fridays by 5pm EST. I am available for help on assignments for all students! Students can post questions to me by either writing or recording videos of themselves. Depending on a student's needs, I'll respond in writing, with a reply video, or schedule a time for a quick Skype chat. If you need help, please ask rather than let an assignment go.

Assessment:

Like all Simplify Homeschool Classes, we provide a short written assessment of the student and their work for the class. We can provide guidance about assigning a grade if the parent is interested in doing so.

Required Books:

The Code Book (Young Readers Edition) by Simon Singh
The Puzzling World of Winston Breen by Eric Berlin

Overview of schedule:

Week 1-6:

The Code Book by Simon Singh - one chapter per week
Culminating project: Mini-research paper

Week 7-12:

The Puzzling World of Winston Breen by Eric Berlin
"The Adventure of the Dancing Men" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
"The Case of the Perfect Maid" by Agatha Christie
Culminating project: Writing a mystery story