

# Simon and the Spy

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## Summary

At the start of a train journey, Simon learns that the police are looking everywhere for a spy. Just before he boards his train, he collides with an 'old woman' and mistakenly picks up a letter which has fallen out of her bag. The old woman spends the entire journey trying to retrieve the letter. Simon meanwhile happily chats to an attractive fellow passenger called Samantha. He suspects nothing, even when he sees the old woman's huge shoes.

The train journey ends and the passengers transfer to a ferry. The old woman keeps trying to retrieve the letter; Simon still doesn't suspect her, even when he sees the trousers under her dress.

While Simon and Samantha share a picnic, the letter is blown away by the wind. It is caught by a dog, which then pulls the old woman's coat off. Finally Simon realises that the old woman is actually the spy. The police arrest him, but they are not happy because they also wanted the letter – but the dog has eaten it.

## Background and themes

**UK trains and ferries:** It is possible to travel by train and ferry from the UK to Ireland, mainland Europe and Scandinavia. It is also possible to travel by train through the 'Channel Tunnel' from London to the French port of Calais, and beyond.

**Observation and deduction:** It's important to observe what is going on around you, and to think for yourself. Simon failed to realise the significance of what he saw.

**Chance:** Chance plays a significant part in our lives; outcomes might be good (meeting Samantha) or not so good (the encounter with the spy).

## Discussion activities

### Pages 1–7

#### Before reading

- Discuss:** Talk about the title: Ask or explain what 'spy' means. Can the students think of any famous examples from fiction? (e.g. *James Bond*).
- Discuss:** Ask students to look at the picture on the cover. Elicit as much vocabulary as possible and supply new words as required (e.g. *station, young man, old woman, policeman, bag, umbrella*). Have the students say what the old woman and the young man are doing (*they're running to catch a train*) and why (*they are late*).
- Guess:** Ask the students to look again at the title, and invite them to use clues from the picture to guess part of the story. If they study the picture, they will probably guess that the 'old woman' is the spy. Don't tell them if they are right or not – they will find out when they have read the story.

#### After reading

- Role play:** Ask the students to role play the conversation between Simon and Samantha, when they meet on the train. Encourage them to refer to the text (pages 4 and 5) but also to add their own ideas.

### Pages 8–15

#### Before reading

- Pair work:** On the board, write this list of words:  
bag boat car dress fruit hair hat jeans  
letter newspaper policeman rain shoes  
ticket train  
In pairs, students look at the pictures from pages 8–15 and guess which of the words will appear in the text.

#### After reading

- Check:** Students look back at their notes from Exercise 4. Were they right?
- Game:** Put the students in pairs or small groups. They choose a picture from pages 8–15 and practise describing it. Go round and offer help where needed. Then put pairs or groups together and take turns to ask 'yes/no' questions about each other's pictures (e.g. *Are they on the boat? Is the dog in the picture?*) until they guess the correct picture. The winners are the students who guess the fastest.
- Game:** Choose one of the pictures from pages 8–15 and make a sentence about it (e.g. *Simon and Samantha are having lunch.*) Choose a student, who repeats your sentence and adds another (e.g. *Simon and Samantha are having lunch. Simon's got a sandwich.*) Continue round the class.