

Virginia Hall: Quite a Character



A Lesson in Character Traits

By Jeannie Johnson-Young

Welcome!

Thank you so much for downloading "Virginia Hall: Quite a Character," a character trait study to go with the biographical picture book "Virginia Was a Spy." This is a great book to use as a mentor text when teaching a unit focused on bravery, heroism, World War II history, or the important role women play in history. It's especially good to use as a text to teach character traits in literature because of the way it was written. The text focuses on Virginia's character traits — explorer, adventurer, fighter, heroic — and how those character traits led to her being one of the most valuable Allied spies during World War II.

This lesson includes a slide show, a detailed lesson plan, and student handouts. This is a very interactive lesson with opportunities for your class to work whole group, with partners, in small groups, and independently. In addition to handouts, the students will be working together to create character trait posters to provide visual reminders for students who need the additional resources. You can teach the lesson in one day or over several days. I would recommend doing it in two or three days—especially if you have a large English Learner population or a number of students who need extra scaffolding. Teaching the lesson over several days is particularly beneficial if your school uses Daily 5 or another format that provides opportunities to alternate whole group instruction with small group interventions.

I have used "Talk, Read, Talk, Write" extensively in my classroom. It is an amazing teaching method developed by Nancy Motley to increase student participation, improve reading and comprehension skills, and produce excellent written evidence of learning. (If you ever get a chance to attend one of her trainings, jump at it. She is fabulous!) I incorporated the "Talk, Read, Talk, Write" method in this lesson plan specifically because it gives students who might need scaffolding (IEP, ELLs) the help they need to fully participate.

I hope you and your students enjoy reading "Virginia Was a Spy" and this lesson on character traits.

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Objective: Students will be able to identify character traits and explain how they can contribute to a person's actions. They will be able to write 8-10 sentences on Virginia Hall and her character traits as a check for understanding or exit ticket.

Standards		
3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
RL3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events; L3.4b Use knowledge of word relationships to identify antonyms or synonyms to clarify meaning.	RL4.1 Identify and draw inferences about setting, characters (such as motivations, personality traits), and plot; L4.4c Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases	RI.5.8 Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s) L5.3c Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

Understandings:	Essential Questions
Students will understand that....	Students will be able to answer...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character traits are those inner parts of a person that makes them a unique individual Everyone has character traits Character traits can be positive or negative Character traits can lead to actions both positive and negative Character traits are an important tool authors use to explain the actions and motivations of their characters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some your positive and negative character traits? How can negative character traits be positive traits for spies? What character traits did Virginia Hall have that made her a good spy? What literary tool did the author use to show her character's traits and support those claims?

Supplies:

- Student handouts
- Post-It notes
- Pencils
- 16 pieces of chart paper
- Markers
- Dictionaries/Thesauruses

Slide Show	You can find the slide show on www.catherineurdahl.com . Click on the For Teachers button to find the slide show.
Slide 1	Explain that Virginia Hall was a spy during World War II, and that they will be learning about character traits. They will be exploring what character traits make a good spy.
Slide 2	You might ask them what they think milking goats has to do with being a spy in World War II.
Slide 3	This is a good opportunity to let the students know that there were two sides in World War II — the Axis (Germany, Italy, Japan) and the Allies (U.S., France, England, and the Soviet Union)
Slide 4	Tell the students you will be exploring character traits in a few minutes.
Slide 5	I always like to read the objective and then have my students read it so they are clear on what they need to learn.
Slide 6	Ask the students if they can come up with more positive and negative character traits. Then, pass out the personal character traits student handout and have them do a quick personal assessment of their own character traits.
Slide 7	Tell the students they will be doing a word study on various character traits and pass out the word study student handout to do whole group. Slide 7 fills in by clicking one box at a time. Have the students fill out each box with you.
Slide 8	Now it's time to do small group work. They are going to create word study posters just like their smaller versions. Each group will get one word (one person in the group should write it on a Post-It), create the poster, and present them to their
Slide 9	This slide is just a reminder of how they should lay out their poster.
Slide 10	Discuss with the class how spies need to be sneaky, good liars, and hard hearted at times in order to do their jobs effectively.
Slide 11	Back to word study small group work. You can keep the students in the same groups or change them up. Have them repeat what they did with slide 8. By the end, they should have enough words up on the walls to help with writing.

Slide 12	This slide is just a reminder of how they should lay out their poster.
Slide 13	This is the first talk portion of Talk, Read, Talk, Write. The sentence stem they need to use is on the slide. I sometimes have them talk as table groups, but I find partners is quicker. Choose 4 or 5 students to share out to the whole class.
Slide 14	Story time! I have broken up the reading by pages to give you the opportunity to ask some of the essential questions.
Pages 1-11	What character traits has the author used to describe Virginia Hall so far? What text evidence does the author provide for those traits? What literary tool does the author use to reinforce her points?
Pages 12-21	The author changes the focus from who Virginia was to what Virginia did. How did her positive character traits help her with what she did in the war? What are some examples?
Pages 22-32	What character traits that might be considered negative did Virginia and the French Resistance fighters have to have to do what they did to the Nazis? What are some examples? (Bombings, attacking convoys, lying about who she was)
Slide 15	This is the second talk portion of Talk, Read, Talk, Write. The sentence stem they need to use is on the slide. I sometimes have them talk as table groups, but I find partners is quicker. Choose 4 or 5 students to share out to the whole class.
Slide 16	Time to write. Have the students write 8-10 sentences about the character traits of Virginia Hall and how she used them to be a successful spy. Remind them they can use words found on the word study posters on the walls.
Slide 17	Have the students return to their own personal character trait survey and have them write 5-8 sentences on whether or not they would make a good spy.

Would I make a good SPY?

Positive Traits

Negative Traits

After listening to "Virginia Hall Was a Spy," look at your list of character traits and determine if you would be a good spy. Make sure you list your reasons.



Word	Definition
Sentence	Part of Speech
Antonyms	Synonyms