

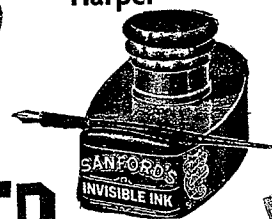
Extra Credit!!!

Using the article "I Spy: Women Undercover", make a crossword puzzle. On a piece of notebook paper, come up with at least 10 clues and answers from the article, and then use graph paper to set up a blank puzzle. You will need to use another sheet of graph paper to write in the words to see how they fit. This will also be your "answer key." Try to get about the same number of "Across" and "Down" words.

Hand in the paper with your clues and the two pieces of graph paper with the blank puzzle and the answer key.

ISPY WOMEN UNDERCOVER

by Judith E.
Harper



Espionage is the practice of spying to gain secret information.

Hoop skirts were long, full skirts that were supported by wire circles.

Petticoats were women's slips or underskirts that often were trimmed with lace.

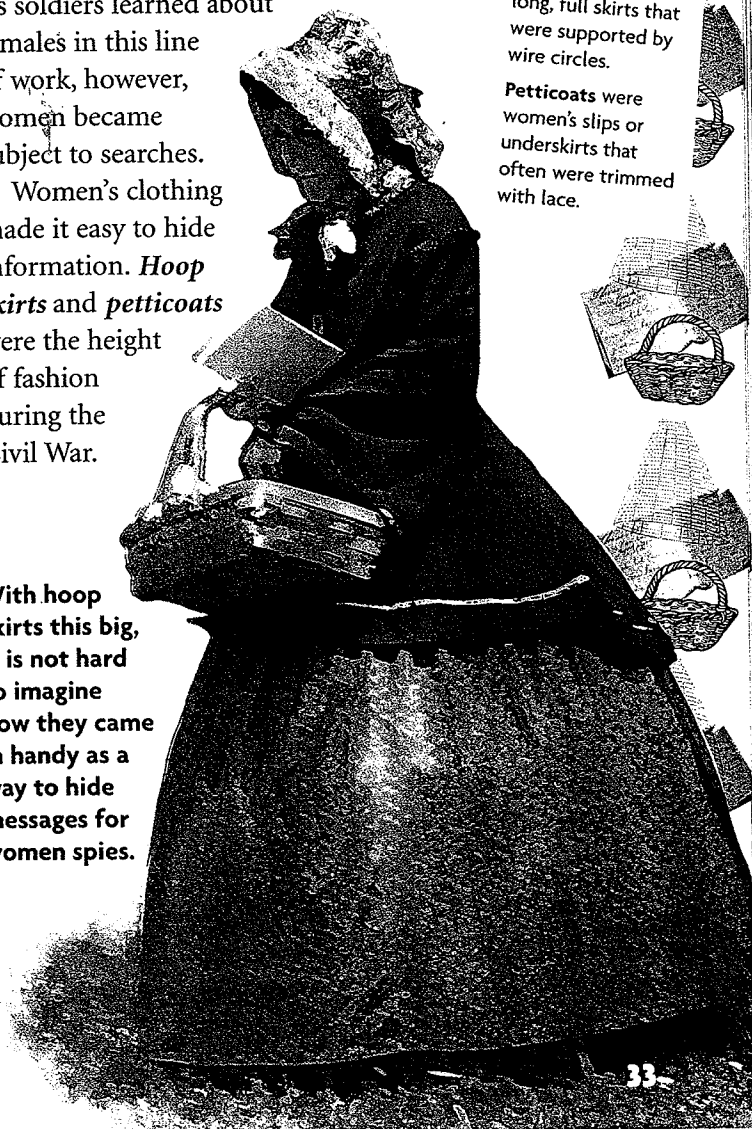
Women and girls of all ages worked as spies during the Civil War. Historians believe that more than one thousand females in the North and the South may have been involved in *espionage*. Most became spies because they desperately wanted to help their side win the war.

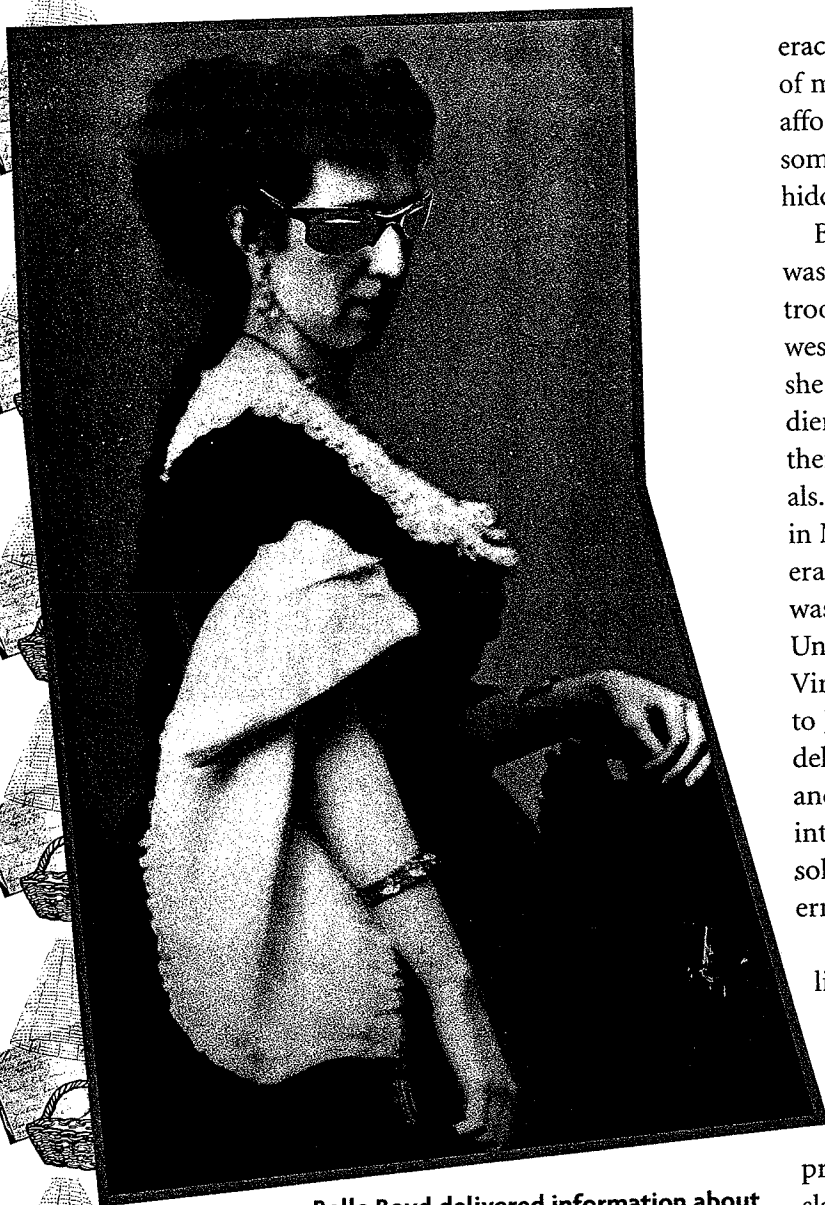
Spying during the Civil War, as it is during any major conflict, was dangerous work. If they were captured, spies risked being sent to prison or hanged. Women spies were not hanged, but they were threatened with that punishment. Yet women spies often were successful in completing their missions. They had several advantages over their male counterparts. Early in the war, Union and Confederate soldiers did not expect females to engage in espionage. Consequently, soldiers allowed women and girls to travel across Union and Confederate lines without being searched. At first, female spies benefited from the customary understanding that only a woman's husband and her doctor

were permitted to touch her. As soldiers learned about females in this line of work, however, women became subject to searches.

Women's clothing made it easy to hide information. *Hoop skirts* and *petticoats* were the height of fashion during the Civil War.

With hoop skirts this big, it is not hard to imagine how they came in handy as a way to hide messages for women spies.





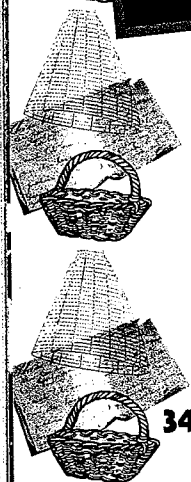
Belle Boyd delivered information about Union troops to the Confederate army.

The many yards of fabric were perfect for hiding messages and papers, and small packages and medical supplies easily attached to the frames of the hoop skirts. This smuggling was especially important to the Confed-

eracy, as its army had a shortage of medicine. Spies who could not afford the expense of hoop skirts sometimes carried notes or supplies hidden in a basket or a bag.

Belle Boyd, a Confederate spy, was eighteen years old when Union troops invaded her hometown in western Virginia. Brave and daring, she spied on Union officers and soldiers and carried information about their activities to Confederate generals. The highlight of her career came in May 1862, when Confederate general Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was preparing his soldiers to push Union troops out of western Virginia. Boyd raced on horseback to Jackson's headquarters to deliver news about the location and size of Union forces. This intelligence enabled Jackson's soldiers to force the Northerners to retreat.

One of the most brilliant female spies of the Civil War was Elizabeth Van Lew. Although she lived in Richmond, Virginia, she was pro-Union and hated slavery. She was the leader of a group of Union spies — both black and white — from the Richmond area. The details Van Lew and her espionage ring gathered about the Confederate military proved crucial in the victories of



A native of Virginia, Elizabeth Van Lew nevertheless organized a spy ring and worked for the Northern cause.

Union general Ulysses S. Grant's troops toward the end of the war.

Van Lew and her fellow spies used an invisible ink to write their messages between the lines of "ordinary" letters. To make the hidden writing turn black, the Union army member receiving the letter had only to add milk to the paper.

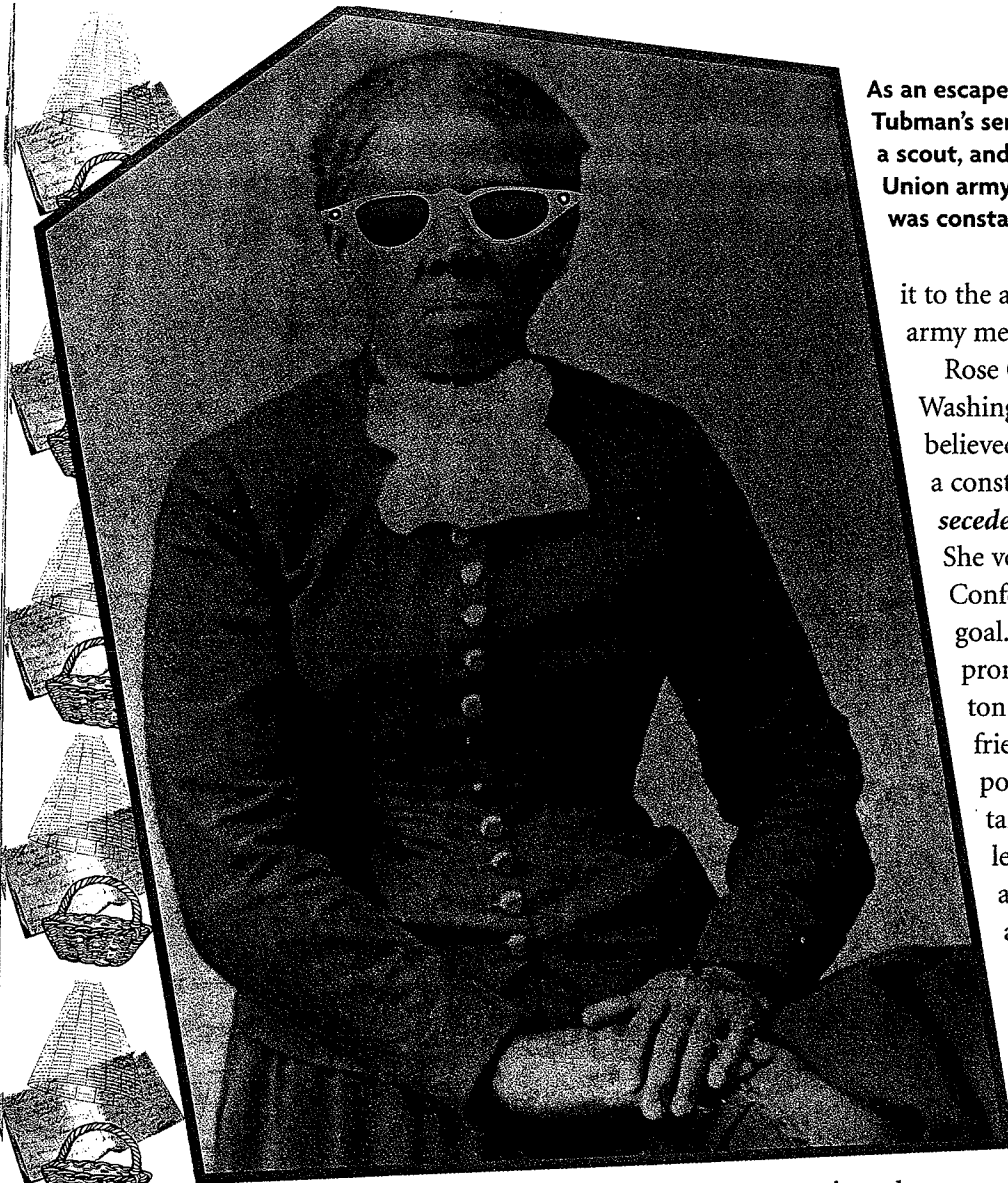


Van Lew also created a cipher, or code, to safeguard the facts in her communications. (See the activity on page 38.)

One of the most important spies in Van Lew's group was African American Mary Elizabeth Bowser, although historians today are unsure if that was her real name. She was a free black woman who worked in the Confederate White House

Rose O'Neal Greenhow used her high position in Washington, D.C., society to spy for the South.





As an escaped slave, Harriet Tubman's service as a nurse, a scout, and a spy for the Union army meant her life was constantly in danger.

it to the appropriate Union army members.

Rose O'Neal Greenhow of Washington, D.C., strongly believed that the South had a constitutional right to *secede* from the Union. She vowed to help the Confederacy achieve this goal. Greenhow was prominent in Washington society and was a friend of Northern politicians and military leaders. She collected information about the Union army from their conversations and passed these facts along to Confederate leaders.

Greenhow's most important

triumph occurred in July 1861, before the First Battle of Bull Run (also known as the First Battle of Manassas). Greenhow persuaded a Northern military official to tell her the strength of the Union troops preparing for this battle. She sent the information to Confederate officers. The South won a decisive victory, even though it was outnumbered. In 1864, tragedy struck when

in Richmond, where President Jefferson Davis lived with his family.

As a domestic servant, Bowser secretly listened to Davis's conversations with government and military leaders. Sometimes, she was able to find and read important documents. Bowser passed this information to another spy in the ring, who relayed

Secede means to formally withdraw.

Greenhow drowned as she was returning from a mission to England. She was buried with full military honors.

Harriet Tubman is famous for guiding slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad. During the Civil War, though, she nursed Union soldiers, helped freed slaves, and spied for the Union. In South Carolina, where Tubman was working, the Union army controlled the coast, while Confederate troops held positions inland. On one trip inland, Tubman guided three Union gunboats and three hundred Union troops up South Carolina's Combahee River. She led them to several warehouses full of Confederate rice and cotton, which the Union soldiers seized. They also freed 756 plantation slaves, who returned with Tubman to the coast. Many of the men became Union soldiers.

The actress Pauline Cushman was a Union spy, though she pretended to be a loyal Confederate. She wore disguises and roamed the countryside on horseback, collecting information about the Confederate military. Cushman also uncovered the names and whereabouts of Confederate spies. After several months, the Confederates arrested Cushman and sentenced her to death. But before she could be executed, the Union army raided the town where she was imprisoned and freed her.

Historians today still are uncovering facts about female spies of the Civil War. It is likely that we will know much more about these courageous women in the years to come. (P)

Actress Pauline Cushman found being a spy was a dangerous role to play — she was almost executed.



