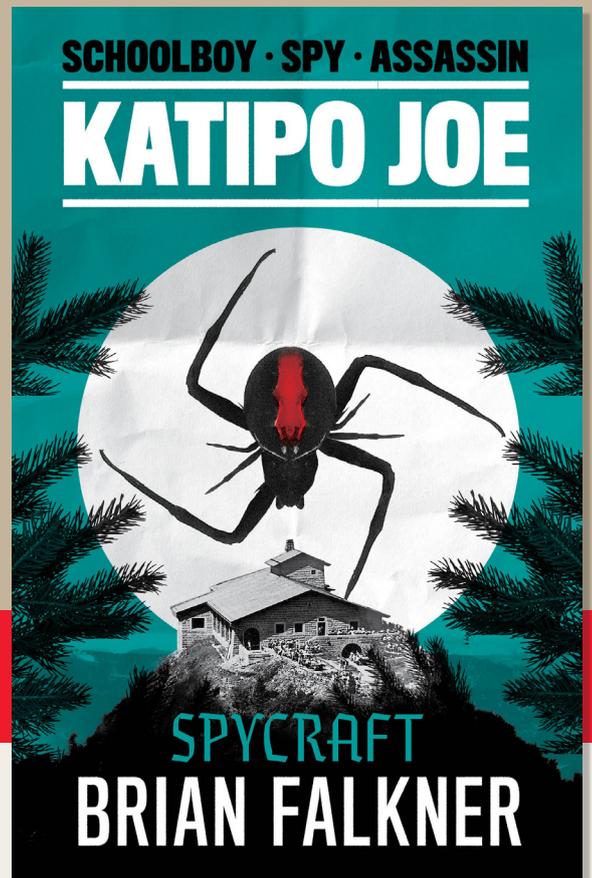


Katipo Joe: Spycraft

By Brian Falkner

• Reading • Writing • History • Thinking Skills •



Synopsis

Katipo Joe: Spycraft is the astonishing journey of teenager Joseph St George (codename: Katipo) in Germany during World War II. On his second mission for British Intelligence agency MI5, Joe is sent to infiltrate an elite group of Hitler Youth at Hitler's headquarters in Berchtesgaden. Here Joe learns he must compete with the other young people for the opportunity to star in a Nazi propaganda film. But he soon finds out the competition is about something much more vital than that and the consequences of failure are torture and death.

Joe has been well trained in the art of spycraft and must use his skills to avoid suspicion while he passes on vital information to MI5. He is surprised to find that his undercover contact, working as a cook in the hotel where he is staying, is his own mother.

When a girl he has started to fall in love with discovers his secret he knows he has no choice but to kill her. His situation is made even more precarious by the arrival in Berchtesgaden of a double agent who knows Joe's true identity. His mother is arrested by the Gestapo and Joe is also implicated as a spy. The only way of avoiding arrest and interrogation is to betray his mother. In a desperate, last-ditch effort to save her, Joe rescues her from the clutches of the Gestapo in a thrilling chase and escapes with her over a high mountain trail into Austria.

About the Author

Brian Falkner began college intending to follow computer studies, but along the way he decided to shift his focus to something more creative. After gaining a diploma of journalism, he worked as a reporter and advertising copywriter. Other jobs helped pay the bills and also expand the first-hand experiences that would enrich his fiction, among them stints as a motorcycle courier, radio announcer, graphic designer, and an Internet developer.

Brian's previous books with Scholastic NZ have been the widely acclaimed *Shooting Stars*, and his World War One novel, *1917 Machines of War*, part of the *Kiwis at War* series. *Katipo Joe: Blitzkrieg*, released in 2020, is the first book in the *Katipo Joe* series.

Brian currently lives on Australia's Gold Coast.



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Writing Style

Katipo Joe is a gripping adventure novel about a 15-year-old boy called Joe who trains as a spy and is sent to Germany on a mission. He thinks he is there to rescue his mother, while the secret service wants him to infiltrate an elite German youth group. Joe is trying to make sense of his life, justify his actions, and live with his guilt. He must learn to fit in with the group and do well in the competition, while at the same time finding out valuable information that might save millions of lives. The book is written in easy-to-understand language that will appeal to teenagers aged 13–18. The novel has one main character, seven secondary characters, and numerous peripheral characters including his mother. It also:

- is a gripping adventure story set in Germany during World War II
- is written in present tense, third person point of view
- touches on themes of survival, personal responsibility, heroism, personal sacrifice, loss of innocence, and war
- has an emphasis on light and dark, representing good vs evil
- includes snippets of memoir that foreshadow events coming up, but sometimes give false leads, tricking the reader
- includes historical photographs at the back of the book, as well as a glossary and author biography
- is set amidst actual events, and references real people.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

The novel has been divided up into five parts as follows: Front matter, pp.1–15; Book 1, pp. 16–91; Book 2, pp. 92–285; Book 3, pp.286–412; back matter pp.413–429.

During the shared sessions, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions, inferences and relate to their own experiences. Also encourage students to identify themes and explain how they are developed in the novel. Read the passages aloud and or students read alongside or by themselves.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- When and where is this story set? How can you tell?
- Who is the main character in the story?
- What do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- What do you already know about World War II?

Comprehension questions

Front matter, pp.1–15

- What is the author's intentions with these preliminary pages? Is Brian Falkner setting scene, or tone?
- Why do you think the paper appears crinkled in places?

Book 1, pp. 16–91

- How has the author included the senses in the opening scene? Name the senses used. (Chapter 1)
- What is Joe's spy name and why have they chosen that particular spider? As a symbol, what else do spiders represent? (Chapter 1)
- How has the author hooked us in with this chapter? What suspense technique has he used?
- How has the author described this secondary character, Jürgen Weyl, his external appearance and implied personality? (Chapter 2)
- How has the author increased tension in chapter 2?
- Why do you think the author has switched point of view in chapter 2?
- Why do you think the Gestapo officer has selected Jürgen and why do you think the grey-haired woman followed them?
- How has the author created distance with the protagonist in the opening scene in chapter 3?
- Give examples of the use of imagery in chapter 3 and how do these add to the scene?
- How has Joe disguised himself and what did he have to do to get rid of any evidence that he'd been in England recently, as well as his parachute?
- How has the author increased the tension partway through this chapter and how does Joe get himself out of his tricky situation? What does it say about his character?



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- Why do you think Flannery is betraying his country by working as a spy for the enemy?
- Why is Joe so relieved when the Gestapo officer says “... like a swarm of insects.” Discuss whether the man is in disguise or a real Gestapo agent. (Chapter 5)
- Why do you think Joe doesn’t tell his contact about Foster?
- What is the mission Joe thinks he is on, and what is the

mission the spies have given him? Why did they dupe him and how has his life and Jürgen’s life collided?

- What test does Joe pass and what does it say about his character? Why was Mathias testing him?
- What spy equipment has Joe been given and what do you think the British expect him to do with it in chapter 6?
- Joe is gathering information about the people around him. What clues has he gathered about Eve?

Book 2, pp. 92–287

- What sort of terminology has the author used to imply they are in a submarine? (Chapter 7)
- Why do you think Flannery is desperate to go to Ireland and not Germany? And why do you think the Germans have tricked him?
- Snippets of Joe’s memoirs interspersed throughout the book give the reader clues. Why do you think the one on page 97 is crucial?
- Why has the author started chapter 8 with description? What does it do for the reader?
- What type of suspense is used in chapter 8? What does it make the reader do?
- Why do you think chapter 9 is so short? What does it do for the overall story and for the reader?
- The memoir before chapter 10 hints at a surprise. What do you think it is and why is it such a doozy?
- What terrible decision has Joe come to, and how do you think he’ll do it without raising suspicion?
- What emotions has seeing his mother roused in Joe? How does this encourage the reader to connect with Joe more?
- What do you think is the purpose of the dinner scene in chapter 11?
- What word sparks intrigue and perhaps gives Joe an opportunity to deal with his Sophie problem?
- What does the memoir before chapter 12 hint at?
- Why does Joe climb out of his bedroom and what danger does it land him in? What else might he have done to get himself out of the situation? And what problems could his actions cause him?
- How does the scene description on page 161 let the reader know where they are and what situation they are in?
- What actions give an idea of Goebbels’ character in chapter 13?
- Why does Joe not want to win the competition?
- Why does Joe not want to sit next to Sophie? What is a ‘vegetablarian’, and what is the significance of the last sentence (‘And he must not name the lambs’) with regard to Sophie?
- What subterfuge do the Nazis plan and what is Flannery’s role in it? How do you think he will expose those plans to the British? (Chapter 15)

- Why do you think Göring, Himmler and Goebbels watch the candidates without smiling? What is the author implying?
- The discussion with Six in chapter 16 reveals a lot about the candidates’ characters. But Sophie’s earlier actions and her speech here are contradictory. Why do you think this is?
- Why do you think Sophie saves Joe? Is it because she doesn’t know what he was really doing, or because she is saving him? Discuss how Sophie’s character is quite complex and why.
- Examine Hannelore’s possible motives in encouraging the other young people to leave the building, drink alcohol and go for a swim. What is she hinting at before they go for a swim?
- How does Sophie save herself? And what does she reveal about her beliefs? How does it change Joe’s attitude towards her, and why does he still feel guilt at the end of chapter 17?
- What repercussions do you think Ernst’s betrayal will have in chapter 18?
- How do you think Hannelore knows what the project really is, and why is she tipping Joe off?
- Who do you think has captured Joe at the end of chapter 18?
- Do you think Flannery is a triple agent or is he just using Joe to get the false Russian invasion plans to England? Explain your reasoning. (Chapter 19)
- Why does Joe make a point of telling his mother about Flannery?
- What do you think chapter 20 is preparing the candidates – and the readers – for?
- The memoir note on page 270 prepares the reader for another beheading. Who do you predict it will be – friend or foe?
- What does Heike’s poem mean, and what does it reveal about her and how the beheading has affected her?
- Why does Sophie loathe Joe, and why does this hurt him?
- Why do you think the author has used chapter 22 as a flashback?



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Book 3: pp. 286–412

- How has the author slowed the pace of the story at the beginning of chapter 23, and why?
- What is the startling reveal that shocks Joe at Hitler's party? And who he choose as his partner?
- Why does Joe think Sophie is the best actress of them all? (Chapter 24)
- What do you think Hannelore's intentions are in chapter 24? And what does Joe feel about it?
- In what way has Brian Falkner upped the danger for Joe in chapter 25?
- What technique does the author use to convey information that there is a traitor close to Hitler in chapter 26?
- Why does Joe betray Hannelore in chapter 27 and what repercussions does it have?
- What does British intelligence send Joe to show him Flannery is lying? And what does that mean about his situation in Germany?
- Why does Karl beat up Joe in chapter 27?
- How does Joe place his mother in danger in chapter 28?
- Why does Joe go to Eva for help? What do you think he wants to tell the Gestapo? What would be his motives in betraying his mother? (Chapter 29)
- How is Joe feeling at the end of chapter 29?
- How does Joe try to salvage the situation for the Allies? And why would Hitler listen to a 15-year-old boy? (chapter 30)
- Why does Joe head towards the Gestapo office? What do you think he has planned? Or does he have no plan but a desperation to help his mother? Discuss.
- Describe how the author increases the tension in chapter 31, as he tries to escape Vogel. What techniques and language does he use?
- How have the Germans double-crossed Flannery this time? Why? (Chapter 32)
- What wordplay has the author used at the beginning of chapter 33 to set the scene?
- What is the climax in this chapter?
- At what point on the journey do you think Joe decided to return to Germany? What helped him make that decision?

Back matter, pp. 413-429

What is a glossary? Why is it needed in a book such as this?

Copy the photographs from the back of the book and place them around the classroom, without captions. Divide the class into groups and ask each group to look at one of the photos. Ask them to observe shapes, textures, the position of people and or objects, then write down what they see – without making any interpretation about what the picture is trying to say.

Next, ask the students, "What questions do you have about this picture that you would need to have answered before you can begin to interpret it?" Have students discuss their questions with their group to try to find some answers. Given the historical context and subject of the piece, ask students what they think is happening in the image, and who the people might be in the photographs. The students then discuss their interpretation with their group and support their view by referring to specific elements of the image and what they know about the history of the time. Also ask the students to reflect on why the author has chosen to include these photographs.

Afterwards, take a few moments to discuss with students how they experienced this process of analysing visual media. It will help them to respond more thoughtfully and critically to the images they encounter in a book.



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Activities

ACTIVITY 1: HISTORY MYSTERY

Ask the students to research what else was happening elsewhere during the time Joe was in Germany in 1941. What other battles was Germany involved in? Were the Allies winning or losing? What was happening in New Zealand during this time? What were the British doing?

Draw a timeline for World War II and use different coloured pens to show some of the incidents that Joe is involved in during that time.

ACTIVITY 2: ROLE PLAY

Ask the students to think about being sent on a mission in enemy territory. What would they feel before, during and after the mission? Ask the students to imagine they are in the belly of the plane when it has been hit. Encourage students to find a partner and ask them to role play the conversation they would have with Foster, the warplane crew member. Would they help him when he is hurt or, like the other crew member, would they focus on helping themselves? Then have students reverse roles so they can experience both point of views.

Reflection: Which role did they feel more confident playing? Ask them to explain to their partner why.

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IF?

What if Joe did not go back to Germany after he got his mother to safety? Rewrite an outline of the ending with Joe escaping with his mother back to England.

ACTIVITY 4: CHARACTER CHART

Write a character chart for the seven Hitler Youth candidates. Find as many details in the story as you can that describe their external appearance as well as their internal characteristics.

Character	Internal characteristics	External characteristics
Karl		
Ernst		
Thomas		
Heike		
Gertrud		
Sophie		
Hannelore		



ACTIVITY 5: LEADER SWAT

As a class, participate in a discussion around what makes a good leader. Write up the students' suggestions on the whiteboard.

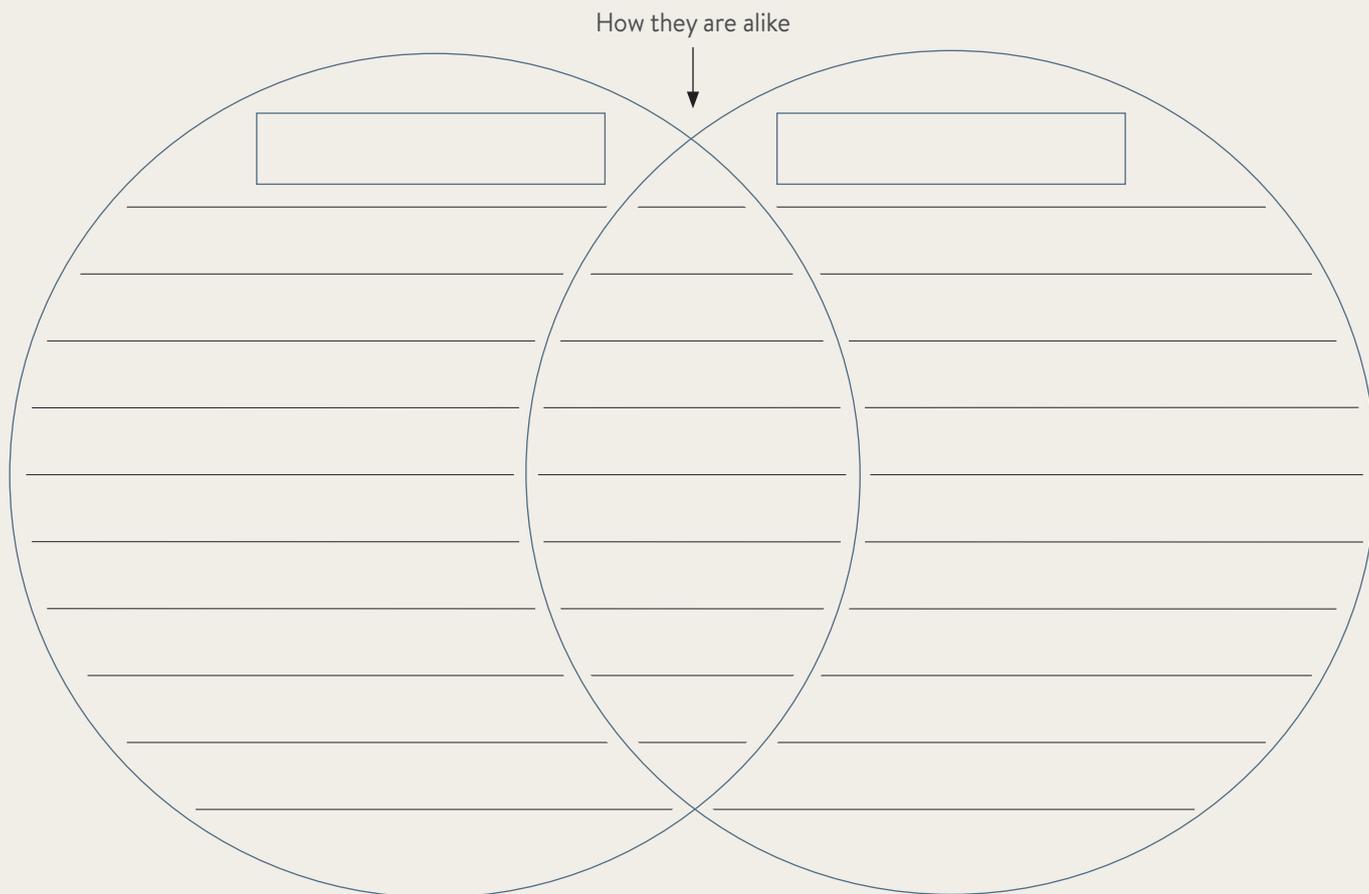
What type of leaders are these people in the book: Joe, Karl, Hannelore, Hitler, Himmler? Eva?

Choose two of the leaders and compare and contrast them in a Venn diagram. In the outer circles, list their differences. In the intersecting circle, list their similarities.

Venn Diagram

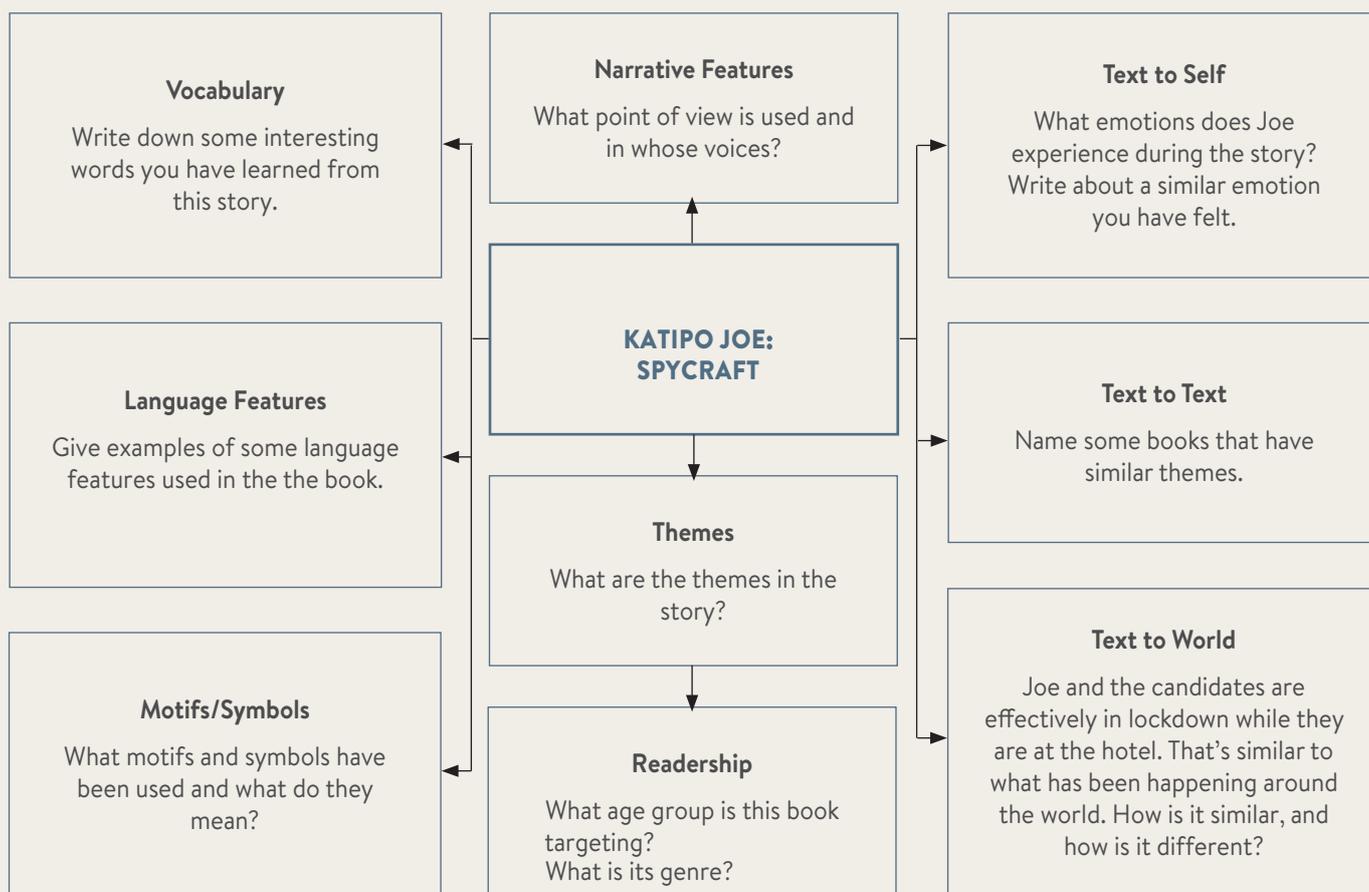
Character Names: _____

Use the Venn diagram to compare and contrast two characters and their leadership skills.



ACTIVITY 6: EXPLORING TEXT

Fill in the questions in the chart boxes that explore the different types of features and themes that are in the story.



Written by Maria Gill

