

# EGMONT USA

## The Code Busters Club Series by Penny Warner

**The Code Busters Club, Case #1: The Secret of the Skeleton Key**  
2011 Agatha Award Nominee for Best Children's/Young Adult Novel

"The Code Busters Club promises to be a fun series sure to appeal to graduates of Encyclopedia Brown and Ivy & Bean."—*Shelf Awareness*

"The villains are deeply villainous, the heroes remarkably heroic, and the plot . . . is a whole lot of fun."—*BCCB*

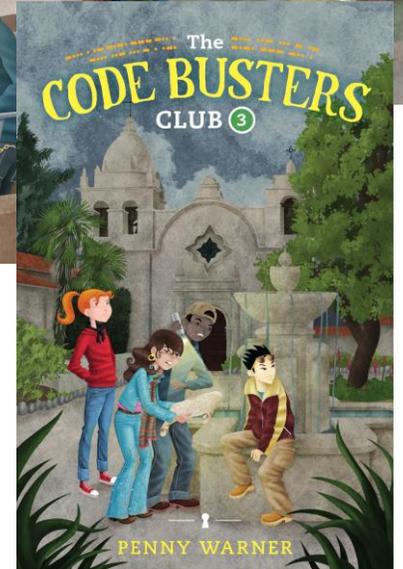
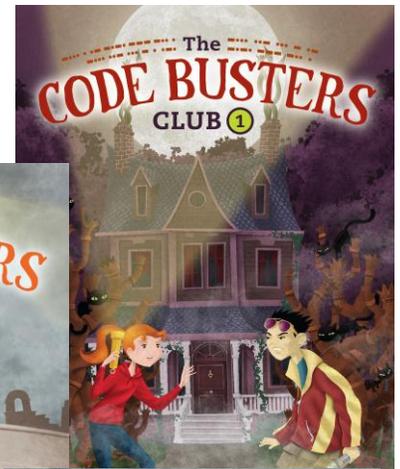
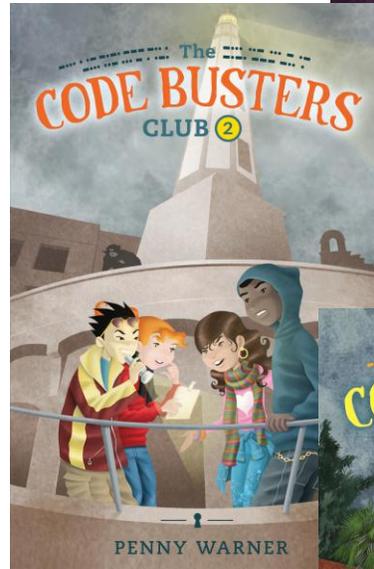
"This intriguing tale has vivid characters and such a tantalizing cliffhanger that readers won't be able to resist cracking the next Code Busters."—*Kirkus Reviews*

**The Code Busters Club, Case #2: The Haunted Lighthouse**  
2012 Agatha Award Winner for Best Children's/Young Adult Novel

**The Code Busters Club, Case #3: Mystery of the Pirate's Treasure**  
2013 Agatha Award Nominee for Best Children's/Young Adult Novel

*Coming Fall 2014*

**The Code Busters Club, Case #4: The Mummy's Curse**



# The Code Busters Club

---

## The Code Busters Club Discussion guide written by Edward T. Sullivan

### *About the Series*

Cody, Quinn, Luke, and M.E. may be really different, but they all share one thing in common: they love playing around with codes. In fact, they love codes so much, they have their own private club, with a super-secret hideout and passwords that change every single day. These exciting interactive mysteries by Penny Warner offer multiple codes for readers to decipher, including cryptography, LEET, Morse code, finger spelling, and flag semaphore. Kids can challenge their brains with the Code Busters and solve the mystery along with them. Answers are in the back, if they ever get stuck. Learn more about The Code Busters Club at [www.codebustersclub.com](http://www.codebustersclub.com).

*These activities are aligned to Common Core and STEM standards and can be applied to one or all of the books in the Code Busters series.*

### *Pre-Reading Activity*

Before they begin reading the book, give students copies of the table of contents and the finger spelling code key so they can decipher the chapter titles. When they have deciphered the chapter titles, ask students to predict what the story will be about.

### *Post-Reading Activities*

1. To what literary genre do the Code Busters books belong? Cite examples from the stories that are characteristics unique to that genre. CCSS.RI.6,[7],8.1
2. You are invited to become a member of the Code Busters Club. Create a dossier for yourself. See the dossiers at the beginning of the book for ideas. CCSS.L.4.3
3. Cody treats codes like math problems, which enable her to recognize the patterns in them. Have students try to identify the patterns unique to each of the codes used in the story. CCSS.RL.6,[7],8.4
4. In pairs or small groups, use print and electronic resources to research the origins, history, and present-day applications for one of the codes used in the story. Share your findings with the rest of the class. CCSS.RI.5.7
5. Cite specific examples of how the Code Busters use deductive and inductive reasoning to solve the mysteries. CCSS.RF.7,[8].3
6. Explain how principles of the scientific method can be applied to solving a Code Busters mystery. Use specific examples from the story to support your explanation. CCSS.RI.6,[7],8.1
7. Have students work in pairs to create their own code. When their code is completed, have them create a message to the class with the objective of their classmates breaking the code and deciphering the message. CCSS.L.6,[7].5
8. Discuss with students the coded language used in text messages. Ask students to explain the meaning of the codes and why they are used. CCSS.SL.4,[5].1
9. Rewrite a favorite scene from a novel in first person from the point of view of one of the Code Busters. CCSS.RL.4,[5].6

## The Code Busters Club

---

10. Have readers work in small groups to act out a favorite scene from the novel for the rest of the class. CCSS.SL.2.5, CCSS.RL.4,[5].7



### **The Code Busters Club, Case #1: The Secret of the Skeleton Key**

#### *About the Novel*

When Cody and Quinn notice what could be a code on the window of a nearby house, the one owned by their strange neighbor, the guy they call Skeleton Man, the club gets to work. And it is a cry for help! Now the Code Busters are on the case—and nothing will stop them from solving the mystery and finding the secret treasure that seems to be the cause of it all. This exciting interactive mystery offers more than fifteen codes for you to decipher, including the Consonant code, Morse code, and American Sign Language.

#### *Pre-Reading Activities*

Ask students what they know about secret codes and what, if any, they have used. CCSS.SL.3.1

#### *Discussion Questions*

*These discussion questions align with Standards 1 and 2 of the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature K-12 (RL).*

1. Why does Quinn start the Code Busters Club?
2. Why did Cody learn sign language?
3. What expertise does Quinn have that he teaches to the other club members?
4. What does Cody's mom do for a living that she thinks is a disadvantage?
5. How does her parents' divorce affect Cody?
6. How do Luke and M.E. become members of the Code Busters Club?
7. How does Cody feel about Luke?
8. What makes Luke think the Skeleton Man was a CIA spy?
9. Who are Jasper and Jezebel and what is their interest in the Skeleton Man's house?
10. How do the Code Busters deduce the meaning of FSK?
11. What provision does Skelton make in his last will and testament?
12. What did Jasper and Jezebel plan to make Skelton do?
13. What problem-solving knowledge or skill is unique to each member of the Code Busters Club?

#### *Post-Reading Activities*

1. Write a letter in the code of your choice to the Code Busters Club telling them why you would like to be a member and what special experience, knowledge, and skills you can contribute to the club. CCSS.W.4,[5].3

## The Code Busters Club

---

2. Write a short story with Matt the Brat as the main character, explaining why he became a bully. CCSS.W.3.3



### **The Code Busters Club, Case #2: The Haunted Lighthouse**

#### *About the Novel*

An infamous prison may hold a secret only the Code Busters can uncover. When Cody and her friends get a mysterious e-mail hinting at a treasure on Alcatraz Island, they can't wait to get started on their clue hunt. Luckily, a class trip to the former prison is the perfect cover to start their search. During the tour, the club members learn that a jewel thief kept at Alcatraz may have hidden his biggest haul on the island and left a series of coded messages to find it. And solving puzzles is what the Code Busters do best. This interactive mystery features more than fifteen codes and puzzles for readers to decipher along with the Code Busters, including Morse code, the tap code, LEET, and zigzag code.

#### *Pre-Reading Activities*

Ask students what they know about anagrams. Show them some examples and encourage them to create some of their own for their classmates to decipher. CCSS.SL.3.1

#### *Discussion Questions*

*These discussion questions align with Standards 1 and 2 of the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature K-12 (RL).*

1. What is Cody's father's profession?
2. What did Cody's parents often argue about before they split up?
3. What places do the Code Busters use for secret messages?
4. Why does Cody think the note her mother finds could be from Matt the Brat?
5. If you were a member of the Code Busters Club, what would your code name be?
6. What was Alcatraz's "Rule of Silence," and what alternative method of communication did the prisoners use?
7. What is the significance of the film *Pete's Dragon* to the message the Code Busters receive?
8. What does Ranger Huynh reveal about Diamond Dave Melvin?
9. What do the Code Busters discover in the lighthouse?
10. What rumors are associated with the Claremont Hotel?
11. Why did Cody's mom send an e-mail message? What had she intended the message to do?
12. Alcatraz has been the setting of many mysteries and thrillers in novels and films. What about it makes a good setting for fictional stories?

# The Code Busters Club

---

## *Post-Reading Activities*

1. Ask students to compose their own riddle poem. CCSS.W.3.3
2. Working in pairs or small groups, have students research one of these infamous Alcatraz inmates and share their findings in a formal presentation: Arthur “Doc” Barker, James “Whitey” Bulger, Al Capone, Mickey Cohen, Alvin Karpis, Diamond Dave Melvin, Pretty Boy Floyd, Roy Gardner, Machine Gun Kelly, James Lucas, Robert Stroud, and Henri Young. CCSS.RI.5.7, CCSS.W.5.8, CCSS.SL.3,[4].4



## **The Code Busters Club, Case #3: Mystery of the Pirate’s Treasure**

### *About the Novel*

On a class trip to the Carmel Mission, The Code Busters learn about Hippolyte de Bouchard, California's only known pirate. Now the Code Busters are on the trail of a new prize: pirate gold! But with a fortune at stake, the codes are bound to be hard. Will the Code Busters be able to figure them out, or will this mystery prove to be too difficult to solve? This interactive mystery features more than fifteen codes and puzzles for readers to decipher along with the Code Busters, including the Orienteering code, Morse code, and the Trail Signs code.

### *Pre-Reading Activity*

At the beginning of the story, Ms. Stad asks the class if they remember the rhyme “Sing a Song of Sixpence.” Ask students to share a favorite rhyme.

### *Discussion Questions*

*These discussion questions align with Standards 1 and 2 of the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature K-12 (RL).*

1. Who is California’s only known pirate? What do the Code Busters learn about him in class?
2. What items would you pack for an overnight trip like the one the Code Busters go on?
3. Why do you think there are different versions of one nursery rhyme?
4. What is it about the old woman in the basilica that creeps Cody out?
5. What do the Code Busters learn from Chad Bour?
6. How did the treasure of the Carmel missionaries become lost?
7. What became of the treasure hunter Franco?
8. What is the Pirates Code of Conduct?
9. Why do the Code Busters keep a watch on the activities of Longbeard and Jolly?
10. In what condition do the Code Busters find Chad Bour?
11. What does Cody trick Jolly into doing?
12. Why did Longbeard and Jolly kidnap Chad?
13. How do the Code Busters figure out the solution to the journal entry?

## The Code Busters Club

---

14. What does Chad give to the Code Busters?

### *Post-Reading Activity*

Working in pairs, have students use print and electronic resources to research the life and legends of a pirate and share what they learn with the rest of the class in a formal presentation. CCSS.RI.5.7, CCSS.W.5.8, CCSS.SL.3,[4].4

Introducing Orienteering, Compass, and Map Skills: Reading this novel is a great opportunity for introducing students to compass and map skills, and orienteering. Many lesson plans and activities are available online. These sites are good places to start: Orienteering USA ([www.us.orienteering.org](http://www.us.orienteering.org)), Orienteering Activities for Kids ([www.ehow.com/info\\_12011183\\_orienteering-activities-kids.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_12011183_orienteering-activities-kids.html)), U.S. Geological Survey ([www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)). Orienteering and compass skills are taught in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Consider inviting a local troop leader to visit your class to demonstrate these skills.



### **The Code Busters Club, Case #4: The Mummy's Curse**

#### *About the Novel*

Egyptian secrets take center stage in this Code Busters mystery. After learning about steganography, the study of concealed writing, Cody, Quinn, Luke, and M.E. discover that artists have been hiding secret messages in their artwork for centuries. A clue hunt on a class trip to the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum leads the Code Busters to an artifact that doesn't seem to quite fit with the rest of the collection. Could it be a forgery? The Code Busters code-cracking skills and new knowledge of hieroglyphic messages will help them get to the bottom of this mystery, but they better think fast before the criminal tries to frame them!

#### *Pre-Reading Activity*

Ask students to share what they know about ancient Egypt and hieroglyphs.  
CCSS.SL.3.1

#### *Discussion Questions*

*These discussion questions align with Standards 1 and 2 of the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature K-12 (RL).*

1. What does Ms. Stad explain about the Rosetta Stone?
2. What is steganography and how are hieroglyphics an example?
3. What is Mirabel Cassatt's job at the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum?
4. What does Ms. Cassatt say can be seen in everyday objects?
5. What is Matt the Brat's surprising talent?

## The Code Busters Club

---

6. Can you determine the meaning of the picture of a triangle with an eye in the middle?
7. What does Quinn discover on the dollar bill?
8. What is Dr. Malik Jordan's job at the museum?
9. What does he tell the class about the Mummy's Curse?
10. What is the Sphinx and "The Riddle of the Sphinx"?
11. How was the Eye of Horus used for mathematical measurement?
12. Why does Cody run her finger over the top of the Eye? What does she discover?
13. What superstitions are associated with the number 13?
14. What does Dr. Jordan say forgers will do as a statement of pride in their work?
15. What does Cody notice about the painted cat?
16. Where do the Code Busters go to look for Ms. Cassatt?
17. How does Luke get Ms. Cassatt to drop the statue?
18. How does steganography lead the Code Busters to discover the fake Eye of Horus?

### *Post-Reading Activities*

1. Have students create a picture containing a hidden message as Ms. Cassatt has the class do in the classroom. When finished, line the pictures up along the white board and try to decipher the meanings. CCSS.W.3.4
2. Make a cartouche: A cartouche is like a name tag. Ancient Egyptians made cartouches for kings, queens, and other high-ranking people in the kingdom. Have students arrange their hieroglyphs in this up-and-down manner on a piece of yellow construction paper or gold wrapping paper. Back with thin cardboard, cut into a loop (squished oval) shape, and hang your personal cartouche on your bedroom door. You can try drawing the hieroglyphs yourself, or you can find the template links on the Internet to print out pictures that you can color in and arrange on your own.

### **Recommended Web Sites**

-  Cracking the Code—Central Intelligence Agency  
<https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2007-featured-story-archive/cracking-the-code.html>
-  Cryptography Brain Teasers  
<http://www.braingle.com/Cryptography.html>
-  Cryptography for Beginners  
<http://www.mastermathmentor.com/mmm/content/files/crypt/Ciphering%20manual.pdf>
-  International Spy Museum  
<http://www.spymuseum.org>
-  Secret Code Breaker  
<http://www.secretcodebreaker.com/>

# The Code Busters Club

---

## About the Author



Penny Warner's first book in the Code Busters Club series, *The Secret of the Skeleton Key*, was nominated for the Agatha Award for Best Children's/Young Adult novel, and the follow-up, *The Haunted Lighthouse*, won the award the next year. She has also won both the Agatha Award and Anthony Award for her novel *The Mystery of the Haunted Caves*. Her books have received excellent reviews and have been printed in fourteen countries throughout the world.

Warner lives in Danville, California. She has taught Child Development for over 30 years. You may visit her online at [www.pennywarner.com](http://www.pennywarner.com), and brush up on your sleuthing skills at [www.CodeBustersClub.com](http://www.CodeBustersClub.com).

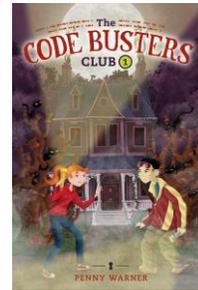
### **The Code Busters Club, Case #1: The Secret of the Skeleton Key**

978-1-60684-162-4 \$15.99 (hardcover)

978-1-60684-390-1 \$6.99 (paperback)

978-1-60684-281-2 \$6.99 (ebook)

Ages 8-12



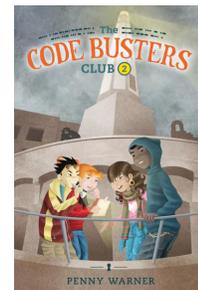
### **The Code Busters Club, Case #2: The Haunted Lighthouse**

978-1-60684-163-1 \$15.99 (hardcover)

978-1-60684-455-7 \$6.99 (paperback)

978-1-60684-362-8 \$6.99 (ebook)

Ages 8-12



### **The Code Busters Club, Case #3: The Mystery of the Pirate's Treasure**

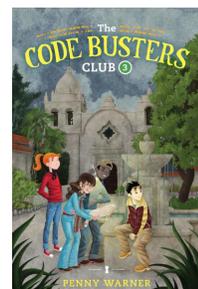
978-1-60684-457-1 \$16.99 (hardcover)

978-1-60684-458-8 \$16.99 (ebook)

*Coming Fall 2014*

978-1-60684-517-2 \$6.99 (paperback)

Ages 8-12



*Coming Fall 2014*

### **The Code Busters Club, Case #4: The Mummy's Curse**

978-1-60684-459-5 \$16.99 (hardcover)

978-1-60684-460-1 \$16.99 (ebook)

Ages 8-12