

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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Episode #347

The Cambridge Five II | Secrets & Spycraft

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[00:00:04] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:20] I'm Alastair Budge, and today is part two in our mini series on the Cambridge Five: a **spy**¹ ring that **infiltrated**² the **upper echelons**³ of Britain's political and intelligence worlds and **leaked**⁴ state secrets to the Soviet Union.

¹ a person who secretly found and reported information about the activities of another country

² became part of them in order to get information

³ higher levels

⁴ reveal, made known

[00:00:35] On a quick practical note, if you haven't listened to part one yet, please do go back and do that, as this episode leads straight on from where we left the story last time.

[00:00:46] OK then, let's get into it and talk about the secrets and [spycraft](#)⁵ of the Cambridge Five.

[00:00:55] In a central London pub, Guy Burgess finished off his drink.

[00:01:00] The air was [thick](#)⁶ with the smell of cigarette smoke, sweat and [frothy](#)⁷ beer.

[00:01:07] Conversation [rumbled on](#)⁸ in the background, chair legs [screeched](#)⁹ on the wooden floor.

[00:01:14] As he so often was, Burgess was as [drunk as a skunk](#)¹⁰, he was heavily under the influence of alcohol.

[00:01:22] But he wasn't in the pub for social reasons, he was there on business.

⁵ the art of practice of secretly finding and reporting information about the activities of another country

⁶ filled

⁷ with small bubbles on the surface

⁸ continued for a long period of time

⁹ made an annoying, high noise

¹⁰ extremely drunk

[00:01:27] **Spy** business more specifically, and he had just established contact with one of his '**handlers**¹¹' - a Soviet agent managing him and the Cambridge Five.

[00:01:38] Putting down his glass, Burgess stood up and made his way to the door, **swaying**¹² slightly from side to side, the alcohol now well and truly gone to his head.

[00:01:49] But as he pushed the door open, he dropped his **briefcase**¹³ and several stolen papers **spiralled**¹⁴ onto the pavement.

[00:01:59] He rushed around to pick them up, **paranoid**¹⁵ that someone would see.

[00:02:03] Would he be caught?

[00:02:04] Would the first of the Cambridge Five be **outed**¹⁶ as a **double-agent**¹⁷? Would the **dominoes**¹⁸ begin to **tumble**¹⁹?

¹¹ the people who organised and managed him

¹² moving

¹³ a flat bag

¹⁴ fell making a circular movement

¹⁵ feeling extremely nervous and worried

¹⁶ revealed, made known

¹⁷ an agent who worked as a spy for the country, but who also worked for its enemies

¹⁸ small blocks that fall one after the other as part of a game

¹⁹ fall quickly one after the other

[00:02:11] A policeman came over to him. Burgess's **spine**²⁰ began to **tingle**²¹.

[00:02:17] But the policeman didn't seem interested in the dropped papers, or rather, his main concern was helping Burgess to pick them up and put them back in his **briefcase** - documents that Burgess had stolen from the British Foreign Office earlier that very day.

[00:02:34] Thanking the policeman and **snapping**²² his **briefcase** firmly shut, Burgess made his way down the street and disappeared around the corner.

[00:02:42] It was a **close call**²³ - just another example of the **sheer**²⁴ luck that helped the Cambridge Five get away with it for so long.

[00:02:53] As I hope you remember from part one, we left the story of the Cambridge Five just as the Second World War had started.

²⁰ the line of bones down the centre of his back

²¹ have a feeling as if a lot of sharp points were hurting it

²² closing with a quick noisy move

²³ narrow or close escape from danger

²⁴ great

[00:03:01] By then Philby, Burgess, Maclean, Cairncross and Blunt had passed through Britain's [elite](#)²⁵ private schools onto Cambridge University, and were [establishing](#)²⁶ themselves in the [upper echelons](#) of the British state.

[00:03:16] Like many students in the [political turbulence](#)²⁷ of the 1930s, during their time at Cambridge their political views had moved far to the left.

[00:03:26] Unlike most students, however, these five men had been [recruited](#)²⁸ by Soviet intelligence. They were “The Cambridge Five”.

[00:03:37] As the Second World War began, the Five were beginning to get [established](#)²⁹ in their careers, in their ‘[covers](#)³⁰’.

[00:03:44] As a quick reminder, Burgess was in the Foreign Office, as was Cairncross briefly.

[00:03:50] Philby was in MI6, Blunt in MI5, and Maclean the diplomatic service.

²⁵ suitable for rich and powerful people, exclusive

²⁶ securing their position

²⁷ difficult or confused political conditions

²⁸ found and employed

²⁹ recognised, accepted

³⁰ positions they used to hide their true occupation

[00:03:57] Clearly, the Soviet's plan of 'turning' high-flying British graduates before they entered the '[corridors of power](#)³¹' was [coming to fruition](#)³², that is, it was really working rather well.

[00:04:09] So, what did they actually do as [spies](#)³³?

[00:04:12] And how did it work?

[00:04:14] Well, essentially, they used their positions of power to pass [vast](#)³⁴ amounts of confidential, [classified](#)³⁵ information East, to the Soviet Union.

[00:04:25] If we take the case of Kim Philby, who is perhaps the most famous of the Cambridge Five, he spent most of his career working for British intelligence, working for the famous MI6.

[00:04:37] If this [acronym](#)³⁶ MI6 [rings any bells](#)³⁷, yes MI6 is also the workplace of another famous British [spy](#), a [fictional](#)³⁸ [spy](#) I should add, James Bond.

³¹ the higher levels of government

³² working rather well

³³ people who secretly found and reported information about the activities of another country

³⁴ extremely large

³⁵ secret, protected

³⁶ the first letters or digits of a phrase

³⁷ reminds you of something

³⁸ imaginary, not real

[00:04:49] And if you're wondering what the difference between MI5 and MI6 is, MI5 deals with internal, domestic, threats, and MI6 deals with foreign threats.

[00:05:02] Incredibly, Philby was so deeply [embedded](#)³⁹ in MI6 that he was even made head of the Soviet [counterespionage](#)⁴⁰ unit.

[00:05:12] That's right: the Soviet [spy](#) was put in charge of Soviet [counterespionage](#), the very unit investigating Soviet spies.

[00:05:22] As you might expect, this was a huge win for the Soviets, it was pretty much the best possible result.

[00:05:31] Thanks to Philby, the Soviets knew most of the names of British agents operating in Europe in the 1950s and they had a constant [stream](#)⁴¹ of information on British intelligence gathering.

[00:05:43] But Philby wasn't the only one [on an upward trajectory](#)⁴²; Donald Maclean's career had also gone from strength to strength.

³⁹ involved, fixed

⁴⁰ related to activities organised to block an enemy's sources of information

⁴¹ amount coming in a continuous way

⁴² moving towards power or success

[00:05:52] He had become a successful diplomat in the Foreign Office, and enjoyed unlimited access to top secret military and nuclear information, which he [leaked](#) to his [handlers](#).

[00:06:04] Guy Burgess had also enjoyed a successful career, working for MI6, the BBC, and the Foreign Office. He [rubbed shoulders](#)⁴³ with [spies](#) and politicians, and just like during his time at Cambridge, he was incredibly social and seemingly knew everybody.

[00:06:21] He even [mingled](#)⁴⁴ with the likes of Winston Churchill, who gave him a signed book.

[00:06:27] During the Second World War the quiet Anthony Blunt worked at MI5, the other arm of the British intelligence services, where he passed on information about German [espionage](#)⁴⁵ activities in Britain.

[00:06:40] And John Cairncross, the final member and the only one of the five from a working class background, worked in the famous code-breaking facility at Bletchley Park, cracking German communication codes, [stuffing](#)⁴⁶ papers into his trousers, and passing the information back to his [handler](#)⁴⁷.

⁴³ spent time

⁴⁴ spent time, associated

⁴⁵ relating to discovering and reporting secret information

⁴⁶ putting

⁴⁷ the person who trained and managed him

[00:06:59] Now, though Philby, Maclean and Burgess are perhaps the most famous of the Five, or the most personally interesting, at least, during the war it was actually Cairncross who was doing the most effective [espionage](#), that is, stealing the most valuable information, [cracking](#)⁴⁸ German coded messages and passing the information back to the Soviets.

[00:07:22] He was even personally credited by the Soviets for playing a major role in its victory at the Battle of Kursk in 1943.

[00:07:30] In terms of just how much information was being passed back, the numbers are quite [astounding](#)⁴⁹.

[00:07:38] The information included copies, photographs, codes and original secret documents, with 1,771 coming from Blunt, 4,605 from Burgess, 4,593 from MacLean and almost 6,000 from Cairncross between 1941 and 1945.

[00:08:02] In fact, often the Cambridge Five's information was so good, so [plentiful](#)⁵⁰, that the Soviets were [suspicious](#)⁵¹, believing that the men's [seemingly](#)⁵² unlimited access to British state secrets was reason not to trust them.

⁴⁸ finding a way to read them

⁴⁹ very impressive

⁵⁰ existing in large quantities

⁵¹ making them feel that something was wrong

⁵² apparently, in appearance

[00:08:16] It was simply too easy, something [smelled fishy](#)⁵³.

[00:08:21] Even Stalin feared it was too good to be true: that they were, in fact, long-term double, or triple agents sent to [infiltrate](#)⁵⁴ Soviet intelligence.

[00:08:33] They were particularly [paranoid](#) about Philby, thinking that his public communist [sympathies](#)⁵⁵ as a young man would have made it unlikely that he would have become so senior in MI6.

[00:08:44] How could it be possible, they thought, that someone who had been so openly communist in the past could become the head of anti-Soviet [espionage](#)?

[00:08:54] It didn't seem to make any sense.

[00:08:57] But what they probably hadn't [appreciated](#)⁵⁶ was the fact that the British class system made this possible; Philby came from a good family, had gone to the right schools, he could [get away with](#)⁵⁷ practically anything.

[00:09:12] As the Second World War ended and the Cold War began, the nature of the Cambridge Five's work began to change.

⁵³ seemed to be off or wrong

⁵⁴ become part of them in order to get information

⁵⁵ feelings of support

⁵⁶ recognised, understood

⁵⁷ do it without being punished

[00:09:20] With Nazi Germany and fascism defeated, they were no longer [spying](#)⁵⁸ for an [ally](#)⁵⁹ but an enemy.

[00:09:27] This was, as you can imagine, an [altogether](#)⁶⁰ different proposition.

[00:09:34] With Nazism defeated, the Cambridge Five could no longer [justify](#)⁶¹ their [spying](#) as part of a broader anti-fascist fight, but they were now [spying](#) directly against their homeland.

[00:09:46] And they became even more important, even more valuable, to the Soviets.

[00:09:53] As you will know, the Cold War was dominated by [paranoia](#)⁶² of nuclear war, and as they moved towards the 1950s, some of the Five began [leaking](#)⁶³ secrets about Britain's nuclear programme.

[00:10:06] Cairncross is considered by some to be the first 'atomic [spy](#)', and while working at Britain's Scientific Advisory Committee he [leaked](#) incredibly sensitive information about Britain's uranium bomb capabilities.

⁵⁸ discovering and reporting secret information

⁵⁹ a country that had agreed to help them during the war

⁶⁰ totally

⁶¹ give a good reason for

⁶² an extreme feeling of worry that it was going to happen

⁶³ revealing, making them known

[00:10:21] It's even thought that the Soviets used information sent to them by Cairncross to begin building their own atomic bomb.

[00:10:29] Similarly, in 1944, Maclean had been [posted](#)⁶⁴ to the British embassy in Washington D.C where he had access to both British and American nuclear secrets. As such, he became one of Moscow's primary sources of information on the West's nuclear development.

[00:10:48] Just think about that for a minute.

[00:10:50] Two British citizens, experts working on building up the West's nuclear [armoury](#)⁶⁵, could be responsible for giving the Soviets their own bomb... during the Cold War.

[00:11:02] It almost goes without saying, but this was some serious stuff, some pretty impressive [spywork](#)⁶⁶.

[00:11:09] Now, the actual [spywork](#) of the Cambridge Five is very different to any kind of [spywork](#) you might be thinking about from, let's say, a James Bond movie.

[00:11:19] The [spywork](#) of these five men was all about information, about sharing confidential, highly [classified](#), information with the enemy.

⁶⁴ stationed, positioned

⁶⁵ the total of weapons

⁶⁶ the process of finding and reporting information about the activities of another country

[00:11:27] So, how did the men actually [leak](#)⁶⁷ their information?

[00:11:32] Having bits of paper [stuffed](#)⁶⁸ into your trousers is one thing, but how did they actually get that information to their Soviet [handlers](#)?

[00:11:40] Clearly, it was a [risky](#)⁶⁹ procedure. Every time a document was handed over, there was the possibility of being caught, with life-threatening consequences.

[00:11:51] Up until 1946, people were still executed in Britain for [treason](#)⁷⁰, and in fact it wasn't until 1998 that the death penalty was completely [abolished](#)⁷¹.

[00:12:02] It was scary stuff, so how did they do it without being caught?

[00:12:07] The Cambridge Five, and indeed all spies whether British, American, or Soviet, mostly used a system known as a 'dead drop' to pass on information.

[00:12:19] A dead drop is essentially when a [spy](#) leaves information - whether photos or documents or codes - in a public but hidden place, and their [handler](#) picks it up later.

[00:12:32] The idea was that the spy and [handler](#) would never be caught in the same place at the same time, though when it was absolutely necessary to speak in person

⁶⁷ reveal, made known

⁶⁸ filled them with it

⁶⁹ dangerous

⁷⁰ the crime of showing no loyalty to your country

⁷¹ removed officially

these meetups were often done in busy public places so they could [blend](#)⁷², and disappear if necessary, into the crowd.

[00:12:50] Just like when Kim Philby was first [recruited](#) in Regents Park back in 1934 and this whole story started, or when Burgess dropped his [briefcase](#) in the pub.

[00:13:01] So, where did the Cambridge Five meet their [handlers](#) and where did they do these ‘dead drops’?

[00:13:08] Well, according to Philby’s own words in a written [confession](#)⁷³ from January 1963, “Our meetings always took place in [outlying](#)⁷⁴ districts of London... and almost always in the open air.”

[00:13:22] “The regular [drill](#)⁷⁵ consisted of [synchronising](#)⁷⁶ watches with a neighbouring clock, appearing at the [rendezvous](#)⁷⁷ [on the dot](#)⁷⁸, taking at least three taxis both to and from the [rendezvous](#) to ensure that no one followed. At each meeting a time and a place was fixed for the next one.”

⁷² look like the other people

⁷³ the act of officially admitting what he had done

⁷⁴ far from the centre, remote

⁷⁵ procedure, method

⁷⁶ having them showing the same time exactly

⁷⁷ the place where they met

⁷⁸ exactly

[00:13:41] We'll hear more about that [confession](#) in part three, and it's worth noting, here, that we can't take anything the Five say too literally.

[00:13:50] For all we know, Philby's supposed '[confession](#)' could have been a [ruse](#)⁷⁹, a distraction, and should be taken with a 'pinch of salt', not completely believed.

[00:14:01] But this method of meeting in public places, being punctual and being careful not to be followed, certainly fits in with what we know of the Cambridge Five and [spycraft](#) more generally.

[00:14:13] They, of course, had to be incredibly careful not to be followed or caught out.

[00:14:19] Philby, especially, as he was heading the anti-Soviet division of MI6.

[00:14:24] If he was caught, it was possible that the entire Cambridge Five [spy](#) ring would fall apart because he had been the first to be [recruited](#) and had recommended some of the others. He could [join the dots](#)⁸⁰.

[00:14:38] But as time went on and the Five became more comfortable in their double-lives, being promoted and becoming firmly [established](#) in their careers, they were sure they'd never be caught.

⁷⁹ distraction

⁸⁰ make connections between the people so that you could understand what had happened

[00:14:50] As you might imagine, this caused several of them to become [complacent](#)⁸¹, to not take as much care as they should to [cover their tracks](#)⁸².

[00:15:00] The Cambridge Five - in particular the now hopelessly alcoholic Burgess - became increasingly [sloppy](#)⁸³, careless over time.

[00:15:09] And pubs and alcohol more generally played a big role in the rise and fall of the Cambridge Five.

[00:15:16] All of the men were known to be heavy drinkers. Burgess in particular, who would have met any modern definition of being an alcoholic.

[00:15:26] According to Philby, though he had recommended Maclean to Otto as a potential [recruit](#)⁸⁴ he had actually warned against Guy Burgess because he was known to be a heavy drinker and incredibly sociable, even during his university days.

[00:15:42] Burgess was [witty](#)⁸⁵ and [charming](#)⁸⁶, and known as a '[man about town](#)⁸⁷', we might say, meaning someone sociable and well connected.

⁸¹ too pleased with themselves and careless

⁸² try to hide what they had done

⁸³ careless

⁸⁴ person to train and employ

⁸⁵ clever and good with words

⁸⁶ attractive

⁸⁷ sociable and well connected

[00:15:50] Just as he had [bragged](#)⁸⁸ during his time at university, Burgess, it seemed, knew everyone and [mingled](#) with high-society figures like Winston Churchill's niece, the famous economist John Maynard Keynes, respected writers and a [whole host of](#)⁸⁹ MI5 and MI6 spies.

[00:16:09] Talk about hiding in plain sight.

[00:16:12] But there was another reason that Philby [cautioned](#)⁹⁰ against Burgess, that he warned Otto not to [recruit](#) him. A secret that he shared with Blunt in fact.

[00:16:23] Both men were gay, they were homosexual, and there is even a theory that the pair had been lovers at one point.

[00:16:30] Homosexuality was still a crime in Britain in the 1930s, and Philby thought that someone could use their sexuality against them, using it to [blackmail](#)⁹¹ them and [extort](#)⁹² secrets.

[00:16:45] But when it comes to Burgess, his main problem wasn't his sexuality, it was his drinking.

⁸⁸ claimed, said in a proudful way

⁸⁹ a large number of

⁹⁰ warned, advised

⁹¹ force them to do it by threatening to tell their secret

⁹² get by using threats

[00:16:52] According to Soviet files released years later, Burgess was, and I'm quoting directly, "constantly under the influence of alcohol," and considered loud and [theatrical](#)⁹³.

[00:17:04] As one MI5 official put it in 1949, "Burgess appears to be a complete alcoholic and I do not think that even in Gibraltar I have ever seen anyone [put away](#)⁹⁴ so much [hard liquor](#)⁹⁵ in so short a time as he did."

[00:17:20] A loud drunk with a [tendency](#)⁹⁶ to draw attention to himself might not [strike you](#)⁹⁷, or seem to be, the ideal spy.

[00:17:28] Yet it was actually Burgess' alcoholism and overly-confident [demeanour](#)⁹⁸ that served as his [cover](#)⁹⁹. People looked at him and thought "a loud and overly confident drunk, surely he would make a terrible [spy](#)!"

⁹³ behaving in a way meant to impress

⁹⁴ drink in large quantities

⁹⁵ strong alcoholic drinks

⁹⁶ habit or likelihood

⁹⁷ seem to be

⁹⁸ attitude or behaviour

⁹⁹ the attitude he used to hide his true identity

[00:17:43] How could a man, according to one biography known as a “smelly, [scruffy](#)¹⁰⁰, lying, [promiscuous](#)¹⁰¹, drunken [slob](#)¹⁰²,” position himself in the high-ranks of the Foreign Office while being a Soviet [spy](#)?

[00:17:55] Indeed, it was precisely this [cover](#) that made him, for so many years, an incredibly effective double-agent.

[00:18:04] Hiding in plain sight, he delivered 168 documents to the Soviets in December of 1949 alone.

[00:18:12] Maclean too, according to Soviet files, was "constantly drunk," and known to be "not very good at keeping secrets.”

[00:18:20] In fact, it's believed that several of the men - certainly Burgess and Maclean and likely Philby - actually [confessed](#)¹⁰³ that they were working for the Soviets when they were drunk.

[00:18:31] Now, it's worth spending a little more time talking about Blunt, the oldest of the five, as his career went in a slightly different direction.

¹⁰⁰ dirty or messy

¹⁰¹ having a lot of sexual partners

¹⁰² lazy and rude

¹⁰³ admitted it

[00:18:41] After his brief [stints](#)¹⁰⁴ in the army and MI5 during the war, he explored other interests and he did far less [spywork](#) than the others.

[00:18:50] Instead, he had a career in academia and became a leading art historian with expertise in French art and architecture.

[00:18:59] In his [memoir](#)¹⁰⁵, he explained that after the war he just wanted a quiet life: "In fact I was [disillusioned](#)¹⁰⁶ about Marxism as well as about Russia. What I personally hoped to do was to hear no more of my Russian friends, to return to my normal academic life. Of course it was not as simple as that, because there remained the fact that I knew of the continuing activities of Guy, Donald, and Kim."

[00:19:27] In 1945 he even became [Surveyor](#)¹⁰⁷ of the King's, and later the Queen's, Pictures, which is considered one of the most [prestigious](#)¹⁰⁸ jobs in the art world.

[00:19:39] This meant that he was in regular contact with the Royal Family, even staying and travelling with them, and advised the Queen on her personal art collection, all while being a Soviet [spy](#).

¹⁰⁴ periods of serving there

¹⁰⁵ the story of his life written by him

¹⁰⁶ revealing, making them known

¹⁰⁷ a person whose job was to examine and record the details of a piece of land

¹⁰⁸ respected and admired

[00:19:51] Like Philby leading the anti-Soviet programme, Blunt hid in plain sight: a double-agent [camouflaging¹⁰⁹](#) himself, or hiding, in the palaces of royalty.

[00:20:03] But as the expression goes, all good things must come to an end.

[00:20:08] By the late-1940s the Cambridge Five had stolen such a huge amount of information that the intelligence communities on both sides of the Atlantic began to suspect that there was a [mole¹¹⁰](#), that there was someone [leaking](#) information.

[00:20:23] After years of being behind, both British and American intelligence were beginning to catch up to the Cambridge Five.

[00:20:31] With the [net tightening¹¹¹](#) around them and many [unravelling¹¹²](#) on a personal level, it all started to go wrong across the Atlantic, in the United States, where Philby and Burgess were working after the war.

[00:20:44] But would the two working in Washington D.C be able to warn their fellow spies back in Britain in time, before the authorities got to them?

[00:20:53] What would they do, once they were '[busted¹¹³](#)'?

¹⁰⁹ hiding

¹¹⁰ someone who was secretly reporting information

¹¹¹ the situation becoming more dangerous

¹¹² happening one after the other

¹¹³ caught, arrested

[00:20:56] And why did the responsibility for all of this [fall on the shoulders](#)¹¹⁴ of the [erratic](#)¹¹⁵ drunk who dropped stolen papers on the pavement, Guy Burgess?

[00:21:05] And why do many think that, at the end of the day, they actually “got away with it”?

[00:21:11] We’ll get into all that, and much more, in part three, the final part of this mini-series on the most successful [spy](#) ring in British history.

[00:21:23] Ok then, that’s it for part two.

[00:21:26] Next up it will be our final part, part three, where we’ll start to see everything [unravel](#)¹¹⁶, secrets to be revealed, escapes to be made, and beer to be drunk at breakfast.

[00:21:37] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:21:42] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

¹¹⁴ was only his to deal with

¹¹⁵ wild, unpredictable

¹¹⁶ reveal one after the other

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Spy	a person who secretly found and reported information about the activities of another country
Infiltrated	became part of them in order to get information
Upper echelons	higher levels
Leaked	reveal, made known
Spycraft	the art of practice of secretly finding and reporting information about the activities of another country
Thick	filled
Frothy	with small bubbles on the surface
Rumbled on	continued for a long period of time
Screeched	made an annoying, high noise
Drunk as a skunk	extremely drunk
Handlers	the people who organised and managed him

Swaying	moving
Briefcase	a flat bag
Spiralled	fell making a circular movement
Paranoid	feeling extremely nervous and worried
Outed	revealed, made known
Double-agent	an agent who worked as a spy for the country, but who also worked for its enemies
Dominoes	small blocks that fall one after the other as part of a game
Tumble	fall quickly one after the other
Spine	the line of bones down the centre of his back
Tingle	have a feeling as if a lot of sharp points were hurting it
Snapping	closing with a quick noisy move
Close call	narrow or close escape from danger
Sheer	great
Elite	suitable for rich and powerful people, exclusive
Establishing	securing their position

Political turbulence	difficult or confused political conditions
Recruited	found and employed
Established	recognised, accepted
Covers	positions they used to hide their true occupation
Corridors of power	the higher levels of government
Coming to fruition	working rather well
Spies	people who secretly found and reported information about the activities of another country
Vast	extremely large
Classified	secret, protected
Acronym	the first letters or digits of a phrase
Rings any bells	reminds you of something
Fictional	imaginary, not real
Embedded	involved, fixed
Counterespionage	related to activities organised to block an enemy's sources of information

Stream	amount coming in a continuous way
On an upward trajectory	moving towards power or success
Rubbed shoulders	spent time
Mingled	spent time, associated
Espionage	relating to discovering and reporting secret information
Stuffing	putting, filling them with papers
Handler	the person who trained and managed him
Cracking	finding a way to read them
Astounding	very impressive
Plentiful	existing in large quantities
Suspicious	making them feel that something was wrong
Seemingly	apparently, in appearance
Smelled fishy	seemed to be off or wrong
Infiltrate	become part of them in order to get information
Sympathies	feelings of support

Appreciated	recognised, understood
Get away with	do it without being punished
Spying	discovering and reporting secret information
Ally	a country that had agreed to help them during the war
Altogether	totally
Justify	give a good reason for
Paranoia	an extreme feeling of worry that it was going to happen
Leaking	revealing, making them known
Posted	stationed, positioned
Armoury	the total of weapons
Spywork	the process of finding and reporting information about the activities of another country
Leak	reveal, made known
Stuffed	filled them with it
Risky	dangerous
Treason	the crime of showing no loyalty to your country

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #347
The Cambridge Five II | Secrets & Spycraft

Abolished	removed officially
Blend	look like the other people
Confession	the act of officially admitting what he had done
Outlying	far from the centre, remote
Drill	procedure, method
Synchronising	having them showing the same time exactly
Rendezvous	the place where they met
On the dot	exactly
Ruse	distraction
Join the dots	make connections between the people so that you could understand what had happened
Complacent	too pleased with themselves and careless
Cover their tracks	try to hide what they had done
Sloppy	careless
Recruit	person to train and employ
Witty	clever and good with words

Charming	attractive
Man about town	sociable and well connected
Bragged	claimed, said in a proudful way
Whole host of	a large number of
Cautioned	warned, advised
Blackmail	force them to do it by threatening to tell their secret
Extort	get by using threats
Theatrical	behaving in a way meant to impress
Put away	drink in large quantities
Hard liquor	strong alcoholic drinks
Tendency	habit or likelihood
Strike you	seem to be
Demeanour	attitude or behaviour
Cover	the attitude he used to hide his true identity
Scruffy	dirty or messy

Promiscuous	having a lot of sexual partners
Slob	lazy and rude
Confessed	admitted it
Stints	periods of serving there
Memoir	the story of his life written by him
Disillusioned	revealing, making them known
Surveyor	a person whose job was to examine and record the details of a piece of land
Prestigious	respected and admired
Camouflaging	hiding
Mole	someone who was secretly reporting information
Net tightening	the situation becoming more dangerous
Unravelling	happening one after the other
Busted	caught, arrested
Fall on the shoulders	was only his to deal with
Erratic	wild, unpredictable

Unravel

reveal one after the other

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com