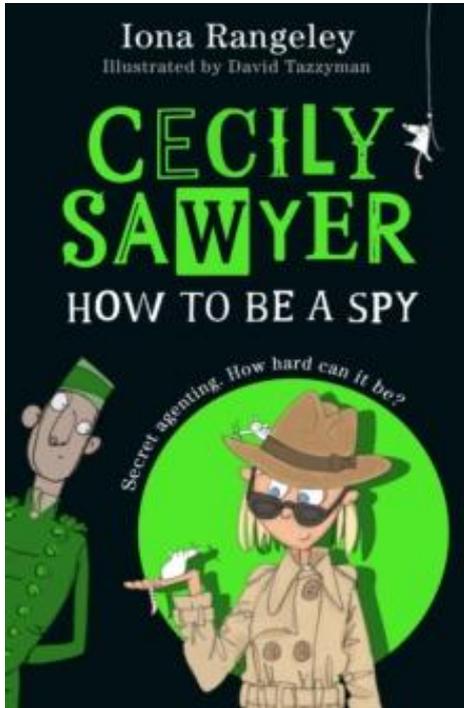
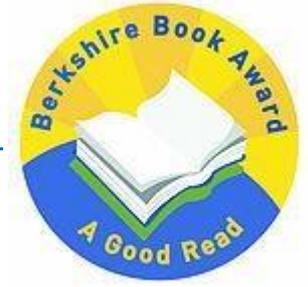


Berkshire Book Award 2026: Longlisted title



How to be a Spy by Cecily Sawyer

Cecily Sawyer has spent the evening in the attic, training her pet mouse, Mrs Maple-Syrup – an unusually intelligent mouse, in Cecily’s opinion – when her parents disappear.

Luckily, Cecily is more than ready to investigate such a thing. She has wanted to be a spy her whole life, and has all the spy handbooks, manuals and code-cracking kits a girl could need.

But soon, Cecily discovers several very strange things in her city. She’s not the only spy out there – far from it, in fact. And Mrs Maple-Syrup is not the only unusually intelligent mouse...

Discussion Questions

- This story uses many visual devices to enhance the narrative, for example illustrations, bold type and examples of secret codes. Which of these did you think were particularly effective?
- The author has made intelligent mice a key part of the story. If you were writing a spy story, which animal would you choose to be the stars?
- Design your own new cover for this book or chapter headings, incorporating your spy assistance animals.
- Devise your own secret coded alphabet, showing the key to how to use it. Write out ‘How to be a Spy’ using your code.