

# WRITTEN REPORT

---

*Project Explororem*  
*Group 2B-02*

Group members:

- Jude Lim Shengjie 21413 (Leader)
- Heng Kim Jae 21408
- Josiah Yan Jian An 21412
- Ni Haoran 21421

# **Table of contents**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Rationale and Objectives
- 1.2. Our Product
- 1.3. Our Research Area

## **2. Research**

- 2.1. Survey of the Ground
  - 2.1.1. Non-fiction books and research papers
  - 2.1.2. The Media and fiction books
  - 2.1.3. Websites
- 2.2. Information Gathering
  - 2.2.1. Accuracy and Relevance
  - 2.2.2. Application of Knowledge

## **3. Critical Reflection**

- 3.1. Creative Product
  - 3.1.1. Choosing short stories form
  - 3.1.2. Choosing to write about political spy
  - 3.1.3. Excerpts from our Story
- 3.2. Challenges and Limitations
  - 3.2.1. Pandemic

## **4. References**

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Rationale and Objectives

Through the use of short stories that are written from the perspective of a spy, we wish to inform our target audience, teenagers, of current and past political situations around the world, and give further insights into the lives of spies and how many of these tensions come about and arise. As traditionally reading articles and news reports are boring to many readers, we would like to convey in a more vivid and descriptive way in the form of stories to our readers. We will vary the political and historical context of our final product in order to provide more context and inform our target audience of these situations.

## 1.2 Our Product

Our final product consists of a collection of 7 short stories that describe various political situations from the modern era to the Cold War to WW2. These short stories will be around 1500 words in length and not as long as a traditional story as we think that shorter stories create a more lasting impact. We aim to extract evidence from various fictional and non-fictional sources and put our own twist on it by rewriting it into a compelling narrative.

### 1.3 Our Research Area

Our research will consist of two parts, one for fictional works and one for non-fictional works. For fictional works, we will be looking into films and spy thrillers such as the James Bond Franchise or Mission Impossible. For non-fictional works, we will be mainly looking into books, news articles, documentaries and historian's work to give us a better understanding of the political tensions and aid us to portray the spy as a figure in a more realistic setting.



## 2. Research

### 2.1 Survey of the ground

#### *2.1.1 Non fiction books and research papers*

For nonfiction sources and reports, they are often quite accurate and provide reliable information on the topics chosen. However, these sources are very long and can be considered long winded and boring for the average reader. These sources often are oversaturated with information and can be at times exhausting to read due to their sheer length and the amount of information it carries with it. Nonfictional sources might also be less accessible as many come from private institutions and universities, which sometimes require payment for access. Furthermore, the sometimes complex words and terms would also mean they are less user friendly as many might not be able to understand the articles fully.

We have decided to research the various political tensions and clashes in beliefs between countries, both in the modern day and in the past. For example, we have also decided to look through news articles relating to the tensions between the United States and Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis, we decided to refer to the John F. Kennedy's biography, "JFK : Coming of Age in the American Century, 1917-1956", written by Fredrik Logevall. As these books are mainly written by historians, we are more sure about them as they are not leaned towards any particular side on the political spectrum and more of unbiased and factual.

### *2.1.2 Media and fiction books*

We paid extra attention to nonfiction and media based sources as these sources are the most similar and provide the best background for our product. Upon further research, we found that these sources were fairly accurate despite the fact that they were not based on real life events in terms of the methods and reasons behind espionage. However, these sources are still prone to exaggeration as can be seen in various movies and books that depict spy technology from the future, and some that the human race has never seen before. Some of these sources might not seem realistic as we are limited by the technology of our time and the ideas might seem a bit far fetched from readers' point of view. Another problem we found with the fiction based sources was that they were of little educational value due to the fact that these events did not take place. The fictional sources, despite having a political spy background also sometimes fail to emphasise on the fact they were spying for political reasons, which might be misleading to readers at times.

### 2.1.3. Websites

Websites, unlike nonfiction reports, are quite user friendly and provide sufficient information for the user, but not to the point that the user is overwhelmed with information. Most of the sourced websites that we found were created by history channels, newspapers and authors. However, what we found about websites is that their information is quite limited in a sense that most of the information in these websites are generally similar and often overlap hence we were unable to find a wide range of information on our genre from websites in particular. Websites also provide a very subjective point of view due the fact that they were the personal opinions of authors and journalists. Many of the websites we found only showed that spies were always heroic and that they were hailed as the national heroes of their respective countries. They hence provide a very narrow point of view and fail to highlight the other types and aspects of a spy.

As shown below, many of the sourced websites provide very similar and widely known information and fail to delve deeper into the understanding of international espionage. Some are also very subjective as they are written by journalists of another country and are criticizing other countries and their intelligence agencies.

<https://www.spymuseum.org/education-programs/spy-resources/espionage-facts/>

(Espionage Facts, May 3, 2019)

<https://www.nytimes.com/topic/organization/kgb> (The KGB, New York Times, June 16, 2020)

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/21/china-stolen-us-data-exposed-cia-operatives-spy-networks/>

(China uses stolen data to expose CIA operatives in Africa and Europe, Foreign policy, December 21, 2020)

## 2.2 Information gathering

### 2.2.1 Accuracy and Relevance

We gathered information from real life spy scenarios from articles we found online, as well as some movies like James Bond and Kingsman. To ensure the sources were reliable, we cross referenced with our contextual knowledge as well as compared articles side by side and picked out the points that resonated within all articles. To improve the relevance of our findings, we decided to check the publish date as well as find out the “up to dateness” of the source. We also went back to our theme multiple times to ensure that we did not go off topic and were on track. Lastly, we made sure that the information we collected was from a credible source.



### *2.2.2 Application of knowledge*

The information we gathered from our research was channeled into creating more realistic short stories that encompass both fiction and non fiction segments. Every political espionage story has a fundamental basis — there will be an aim, a plan, the action, and the result, whether the espionage was a success or failure. Thus, we utilised the formatting of most political spy stories to create our short story. We wrote the stories with the fact in mind that not every espionage is a success, so we added some difficulties and challenges. We accounted for the fact that every espionage requires a sophisticated and meticulous plan, so our characters would have added pragmatism. We went through countless books and movies just to add the little details that make our story more realistic and not just the idealistic scenario. By this, we mean that there were intentional complications that were added to our short stories to spice up the action as well as immerse the reader. We will admit, not everything we wrote was based on the real life outcome, but we wanted to explore and stretch the boundaries of reality, allowing us to make our stories unique but also realistic.

## 3. Critical Reflection

### 3.1 Creative Product

#### *3.1.1 Choosing online short stories form*

We decided to choose to write in a short story format (between 1000 to 7499 words) because it was deemed by us to be the most appropriate length to convey the whole story, without being too draggy. We could have chosen to write a Novelette (between 7,500 to 19,999 words), but it would be unnecessarily long and we came to the conclusion that a short story would be most appropriate. We felt that short stories could attract the attention of readers for the longest time, with more focus on exciting parts like actions, so that readers would not lose interest halfway through. Short stories could also have more cases of spying in the same word count as compared to a novelette.

As compared to screenplays, which have more focus on dialogue, short stories could also describe the actions, tactics of the spies. Short stories can also express the spies' inner dialogue, emotions and feelings, to allow readers to experience what the spies are feeling better, to allow for a more pleasurable experience. Lastly, short stories can also use visual imagery, to allow the reader to feel like he or she is experiencing what the spy is experiencing.

We also chose to have our short stories online on a google site because it allows us to be able to reach more of our target audience through sending via whatsapp or allowing them to scan QR codes. If we printed a hard copy version of the short stories, we would only have a few copies to give out to others, allowing us to reach less of our target audience. Moreover, during the pandemic, we want to minimise interaction with others. Uploading the stories online would also be more environmentally and cost friendly. Lastly, online short stories are more accessible and mobile than hardcopy ones because teenagers have their phones with them all the time, and they just need to open their phone to access the short stories instead of bringing another book with them. Our site is: <https://sites.google.com/student.hci.edu.sg/project-exploratorem/home>

### 3.1.2 Choosing to write about political spy

We chose to write about political espionage because we felt that it is not a very common topic amongst teenagers, and the genre mainly caters to adults. As such we wanted to expose our target audience, teenagers to this genre. The spy genre also has many movies, some which may not be as accessible as short stories, or may require people to buy the movie or watch it on streaming services, which may cause quite a bit of money. Teenagers who watch espionage movies and desire more content would thus have no way to obtain it for free. However, with our short stories, which are included in our free google site, they can have access to exciting and free political spy stories, which they can read in their free time.

Moreover, political spy is not a very popular genre amongst teenagers, and we wanted to expose them to this genre, which we feel is very entertaining.

All books in

## What's Popular?

The hottest books in the library right now. If it's not available, place a hold!

Listing 825 books × . Includes: Thriller × .

As shown above, which is a picture from the popular section from the online NLB (national library board) app, there are only 825 thriller books for young adults, of which a small portion are political spy books.

All books in

## What's Popular?

The hottest books in the library right now. If it's not available, place a hold!

Listing 3,221 books × . Includes: Fantasy × .

As shown in the above picture from the same NLB app, Fantasy, the most popular genre for young adults, has 3221 books, many times more than the political spy books. Lastly, as the name suggests, political spy fiction is heavily based on real life political situations that happened in the past or present. Hence, by reading our stories, students can learn more about the world around them, and the world in the past.

### 3.1.3 Excerpts from our story

#### 3.1.3.1 China vs the world

*“The feeling of free falling is indescribable, the sheer thrill of falling through the air at breakneck speed may be so exciting, but the terror, the terror of falling flat onto the ground like a pancake also terrifies you, making you wonder why you ever did it in the first place. My goggles displayed a red sign, telling me that I should release my parachute. I did. Looking at the scenery, the rivers, the mountains filled me with a sign of wonder. But it was all disrupted after hearing Joash’s shrill scream. No matter how many times he did the free fall, he always felt scared.*

*We landed on the top of the facility, which was a research lab in Wuhan, China. I looked around and ensured everyone was safe before making my move. I noticed a small hatch at the corner of the rooftop and made my way towards it. I presumed that it led to the interior of the building. I took out the pen and immediately started to cut the locks that held the hatch door in place. The door swung open, and revealed a yellow ladder that led to a stairwell. I signalled to my team to join me. I stuck my head down and saw that the close was clear. Then, I lowered my feet onto the ladder and started making my way down, while my team also followed suit. I was the first to reach the stairwell, so while waiting for the rest of the team to also make their way down, I surveyed my surroundings and memorised the environment in case we had to make a quick and impromptu escape.”*

From the first paragraph, one can see the spy’s perspective about his job, although spying in general is filled with dangerous encounters, he enjoys it and savours the small things in life. The spy also has forged a close friendship with his fellow spies. In terms of the writing we used sentences like, *“The feeling of free falling is indescribable, the sheer thrill of falling through the air at breakneck speed may be so exciting, but the terror, the terror of falling flat onto the ground like a pancake also terrifies you, making you wonder why you ever did it in the first place.”* This conveys the sense of excitement and wonder

from the spy, making the stories more exciting and allowing the reader to feel what the spy is feeling.

From the second paragraph, we described the multitude of ways in which the spies broke into the facility. Although the spies are equipped with deadly weapons and skills, they would rather sneak in and out carefully, which highlights the meticulousness of the spies. We used visual imagery to allow the reader to better understand and visualise the operations of the spy, and they can imagine what the spy is doing. There is also some mention of the gadgets used by the spies to invoke interests in the technology of the spies, something that we feel is one of the most interesting parts of spy fiction.

### 3.1.3.2 North Korea vs United States

*“Next, we will sneak in through this area,” I said, pointing to the yellow point, “We would explode the smoke bombs here to prevent the cameras from detecting us. We would also have to wear these skinsuits so that the scanners would reflect off us. Once we are inside, we would have to get to the nuclear control room, disable the nuclear weapons, then download the plans on the thumbdrive. Try to resort to killing as a last resort, those soldiers probably have families to feed. Any questions?”*

*“5 minutes later, we arrived at the bend. I was about to turn when I heard people standing around the manhole we entered the pipe from. There was a faint sound of talking, and the language they were speaking was what I presumed to be Korean. Instinctively, my team and I knew that if we were caught, we were in deep trouble. The stakes were high, we were in an extremely dangerous and risky situation, and the fact that the pipe amplified every single movement we made was not helping matters.”*

The first paragraph details the way in which the spies would sneak through the areas. The dialogue sets up what the spies will be doing in the future. This also shows the spies' no nonsense attitude, and their mercy at not killing anyone they see. The second paragraph details the feelings and thoughts of the spy, and shows that they are not completely emotionless, and have doubts about their own skills and abilities.

## 3.2 Challenges and Limitations

### 3.2.1 *Pandemic*

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, our daily lives were disrupted, which caused inconvenience to us. For example, we could not meet up face to face that much and hence had to meet online. However, online discussions were inefficient due to the large number of online distractions and other problems like connectivity issues, or some online platforms being unable to present one's screen. Different members of the group also had different conflicting schedules which made it difficult to meet online, compared to just meeting for a while after school, which was much more convenient. It was also more difficult to converse and discuss our story ideas online as compared to real life, which led to several instances of miscommunication amongst group members. Lastly, during the period of home based learning, we had to communicate via whatsapp because we could not see each other in school. Sometimes, we did not see the messages sent in the chat because we were doing other things such as schoolwork. However, in this case we just tried to call each other lest we were unable to respond to the messages.

### *3.2.2 Coping with schoolwork and CCA*

Last year, due to the widespread transmission of Covid 19, we had home based learning for about 2 months, which was during the common tests period. This resulted in students being unable to take some tests, which lightened the workload significantly. However, this year, we experienced the full force of Hwa Chong school life, due to the pandemic being not as widespread. As such, we had to take all the tests, as well as take our Co-curricular activities as well. This led to a lot of time constraints, which reduced the time at which all four of us could meet, due to conflicting CCA and tuition schedules. As such we had to have a lot of meetings online late at night, once everyone's CCA and tuition ended. However, by then we were all very tired from the day's work and hence this led to reduced productivity. Nevertheless, we managed to finish our workload, particularly during the June holidays where there was no CCA due to the pandemic.

## 4. References

Politico: How US and North Korea could stumble into World War III(January 6 2018)

<https://www.politico.eu/article/how-us-north-korea-could-stumble-into-world-war-iii/>

Wikipedia: North Korea–United States relations (5 August 2021)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Korea%E2%80%93United\\_States\\_relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea%E2%80%93United_States_relations)

Business Times: Chinese scientist at centre of virus controversy denies lab leak theory(June 15 2021)

<https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/chinese-scientist-at-centre-of-virus-controversy-denies-lab-leak-theory>

Wikipedia: September 11 attacks (8 August 2021)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September\\_11\\_attacks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks)

Wikipedia: Killing of Osama bin Laden(24 July 2021)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing\\_of\\_Osama\\_bin\\_Laden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_Osama_bin_Laden)

Wion: Shakeel Afridi: Man who helped the US find Osama Bin Laden languishes in prison(Apr 29 2021)

<https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/shakeel-afridi-man-who-helped-the-us-find-osama-bin-laden-languishes-in-prison-381346>

Wikipedia: Attack on Pearl Harbour (21 July 2021)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack\\_on\\_Pearl\\_Harbor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack_on_Pearl_Harbor)

FBI.gov: Pearl Harbor Spy

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/pearl-harbor-spy>

Casino Royale by Ian Fleming (1 July 2013)

<https://libbyapp.com/search/nlb/search/query-casino%20royale/page-1/848607>

The Lions of Lucerne by Brad Thor(25 April 2003)

<https://libbyapp.com/search/nlb/search/query-brad%20thor/page-1/35116>

Red Sparrow by Jason Matthews(4 June 2013)

<https://libbyapp.com/search/nlb/search/query-red%20sparrow/page-1/1319585>

Christopher McQuarrie (Director). (2018) *Mission Impossible - Fallout* [Film] Paramount pictures

Matthew Vaughn (Director). (2014) *Kingsman: The Secret Service* [Film] Marv Studios

Picture of James Bond from *The Hollywood Reporter*

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/no-time-die-end-daniel-craigs-james-bond-1233452/>

Picture of Mission: Impossible from *Indiewire*

<https://www.indiewire.com/2018/07/mission-impossible-movies-ranked-1201987784/>

Picture of Kingsman: The Golden Circle from *Wikipedia*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingsman:\\_The\\_Secret\\_Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingsman:_The_Secret_Service)

Wikipedia: Aldrich Ames (8 August 2021)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldrich\\_Ames](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldrich_Ames)

FBI -- Aldrich Ames (18 March 2020)

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/aldrich-ames>

Smithsonian -- Thirty Years Later, We Still Don't Truly Know Who Betrayed These Spies  
(November 2015)

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/still-unexplained-cold-war-fbi-cia-180956969/>

Guardian -- Ex-CIA officer Kevin Mallory sentenced to 20 years for spying for China  
(18 May 2019)

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/18/ex-cia-officer-kevin-mallory-sentenced-to-20-years-for-spying-for-china>

Counterintelligence: Kevin Mallory (1 May 2017)

<https://usnwc.libguides.com/c.php?g=661096&p=6496052>

Wikipedia: William Kampiles (14 May 2021)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Kampiles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Kampiles)

Chicago Tribune: Spy sees cell door opening (8 April 1996)

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1996-04-08-9604080177-story.html>