CRYPTOLOGY IN FICTION
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This document contains a list of all the pieces of fiction (short stories, novels, chapters in novels, etc.) that I've found over the past 15 years or so that contain cryptograms of one sort or another as part of the story line. Most of them are simple substitutions or transpositions, some of them are presented but never solved, and very few of them use newer computer-based algorithms or systems.

I've generally not included any juvenile fiction (although I'm slowly changing that). So most of these stories will fall in the categories of mysteries, detective stories, spy stories, or treasure hunts.

The stories are sorted alphabetically by author.

Two entries of note are the ones by Galland and Langren.

In 1945, Joseph Galland published An historical and analytical bibliography of the literature of cryptology, at that time the most extensive bibliography of the literature of cryptology. In that list there are about 26 entries of fiction.

Henry Langen's unpublished Bibliography of the Literature of Cryptography from 1956 contains 186 entries of crypto fiction. Henry E. Langen was a vice-president of the American Cryptogram Association (ACA) and was Editor of The Cryptogram, the magazine of the ACA from 1952 - 1956. In 1956 Langen compiled a list of some 850+ books, stories, white papers, and magazine articles about cryptology, titled Bibliography of the Literature of Cryptography. Of these, some 300 are related to cryptology in fiction and 186 of them have been confirmed and are in the current list. A copy of Langen's bibliography ended up in the Jack Levine Collection at North Carolina State University. Levine was a mathematician who taught at NCSU for many years and was an avid collector of things mathematical and cryptographical. Levine published the definitive English word pattern list.

If you find any stories that aren't on this page, or if you find any errors, please let me know at jfdooley@knox.edu.
LIST OF STORIES USING CRYPTO


6. Anderson, Frederick Irving. “Counterpoint.” In *Adventures of The Infallible Godahl*, 266. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Publishers, 1913. Ace thief, the Infallible Godahl is engaged to steal a ring from Mr. Mapes, who at one time was in charge of a spy ring, but has apparently retired. Mr. Mapes, though has some letters in his possession that appear to have been steamed open. The letters contain stock information on one side, and musical scribblings on the other. The scribblings turn out to be a simple cipher akin to a Baconian biliteral cipher. Pairs of notes are turned into letters of the alphabet. For example, $a = aa$, $b = ab$, $c = ac$, $f = ba$, etc. The letters turn out to describe US military defense plans for the Panama Canal.
From www.tomswift.info: The book opens with Ned Newton working on “small, but complicated mechanism.” Ultimately, we find it is a “pocket wireless sender” to be used to communicate via a cipher code if/when one of the chums is in trouble.

Feisty 75-year old Grandma Finney is kidnapped and sends a ransom message that is a puzzle to her grandson based on the arrangements of the letters on a telephone dial. His solution helps rescue Mrs. Finney. The whole story revolves around the puzzle and the boy’s solution. The puzzle itself is clever, depending on the sounds in the message rather than their actual starting letters, but the story is somewhat weak.

A fisherman’s wife finds a ring in a fish and two con artists try to guess the initials inside the ring. A simple puzzle in a simple, short story based on letters that still look like letters upside down, rightside up, backwards & forwards - M, W, O, H, I, Z, N, S, ...

Juvenile mystery. Seven parrots each can vocalize part of a mysterious message. The message is a code, leading to the recovery of a stolen art masterpiece.

A dying scientist leaves a puzzle whose solution leads to the person who is supposed to inherit all his research notes. Contrary to the title, this is a linguistic puzzle that depends on knowing the fact that none of the words for the integers from one to nine hundred ninety-nine contain the letter “a”. The answer to this puzzle is a pun on the heir’s name. Well written, but the solution really requires an ‘Aha’ moment.

Henry, the astute waiter for the Black Widowers, figures out a possible cryptographic system that uses just a matchbook as the key and the message transmission medium. The system marks the thirty matches in a standard matchbook to transmit messages. It is clear from the story that the messages are numbers in the range zero to around two billion but what is not clear is what the numbers mean. From the context they are likely an index to a code book.

Henry, the clever waiter for the Black Widowers, figures out a mathematician’s computer password, based on the first letter of each line in a sonnet. The basis for the solution is the analysis of the mathematician’s background and character that leads Henry to the correct
guess of which sonnet to use.

Dr. Wendell Urth solves a punning puzzle left by a dying astronaut. The puzzle leads to Urth himself, and the pun (in two languages) provides the location of a hidden alien device. This is quite a long story for a fairly obscure - and short - message.

Larry, the kid, helps his father the detective by figuring out how a gang of criminals is using The New York Times crossword puzzle to change keys for a cipher. A very clear and succinct description of one way to solve the key management problem.

Henry, the waiter, figures out a puzzle that leads to the combination of a safe. The puzzle depends on visual differences between the L and 1 keys on a typewriter. As with most Asimov stories, the writing is wonderful and the setup of the puzzle is interesting, but the puzzle itself is weak.

A good samaritan (who turns out to be the bastard child of his benefactor) inherits an estate and a cipher that unlocks a family secret. The cipher is a monoalphabetic substitution using the family motto as the key phrase. The novel itself is somewhat long and turgid, but the solution to the cipher is very clever.

Reggis Fortune investigates a series of murders of petty criminals and the attempted murder of a cathedral dean. Medieval documents and gold highlight the crimes. A code book is discussed but no examples of coded messages or cryptanalysis are given.

A selection of short stories about the famous Mr. Fortune, sleuth, doctor, and all around cool guy. In “The German Song”, Mr. Fortune finds the key to a cipher message. The message gives the location of some stolen property. The monoalphabetic substitution cipher uses a German song as its key.

Mr. Fortune solves another crime that contains a coded message. Poor, rich Mr. Larkin’s secretary and her accomplice are thinking murder and swap coded messages in Greek in seed catalogues.
Mr. Fortune is called in to the mysterious case of a millionaire who dies in London and whose teeth are found on the side of a mountain in Switzerland. The story contains a coded message using code words.

Near Washington, D.C., there are two clandestine institutions: the world’s most unusual laboratory and a secret CIA training camp. Drawn to these sites by a murder, ex-Secret Service agent Sean King encounters a dark world of mathematicians, codes, and spies. His search for answers soon leads him to more shocking violence-and an autistic girl with an extraordinary genius. Now, only by working with his embattled partner, Michelle Maxwell, can he catch a killer...and solve a stunning mystery that threatens the entire nation. Includes discussion of the Beale Cipher (that’s also the cipher on the cover), although there is nothing in the actual book about the Beale Cipher. (Overall, this is a really bad book. Thin characters, obvious plot.)

A homely witch is delighted to find a secret recipe for beauty but it is written in a code that the reader must help her decipher by learning the letters of the alphabet. The cipher is a monoalphabetic substitution. A children’s novel meant for pre-schoolers through early elementary grades, with a cipher to match.

Balzac wrote two works with cryptograms in them. “Physiologie de Mariage”, with a long, 3600 character cryptogram of unknown type, and “Histoire des Treize: Ferragus, chef des Devorants” which contains a grille cipher. Balzac gives the solution of the cryptogram but not the original text.

In 1920, Dexter Drake solves a mixed-alphabet monoalphabetic substitution cipher that uses the numbers on a roulette wheel to mix the alphabet. The cipher message uncovers a puzzle in the form of a short poem that leads to a Russian family treasure. The story is very well written and plausible and there is a good discussion of Drake’s thought processes as he unravels the mystery.

A Scotland Yard Mystery. Contains a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher.

27. Barsky, Robert E. *Adventure of the Turning Century*. 
http://robb9000.home.comcast.net/sherlock.htm
Sherlock Holmes uncovers a message hidden in a supposed cryptogram (using chaff and winnowing) using the Binomial Theorem as the method of uncovering the key. The
positions of Jupiter and Venus relative to the other planets out from the sun give the values of X and Y. Holmes then uses the binomial theorem to compute the distances between plaintext letters in a piece of supposedly random text sent by Professor Moariarty to his gang. The cipher is clever, but its solution depends on knowing facts about Professor Moriarty that the reader is unlikely to possess.

Bromley Barnes, Detective series. This story contains a null cipher. Langen gets the name wrong. His story is titled “Adventure of the Stolen Messenger.” The original book is out of print and unavailable except for a Kindle ebook version in a collection titled "Bromley Barnes, Detective: A Collection of Mysteries (Twelve Bromley Barnes mysteries in one collection!)", published in 2010.

A mystery in verse. When Horace the Elephant decides to throw a party for his own 11th birthday, he never suspects that a crime will be committed by lunchtime. Who has stolen the birthday feast? The solution lies in the solutions of puzzles embedded in each illustration, including hieroglyphics, anagrams, a pigpen cipher, a Caesar cipher, and Morse code.

Standard escape tale - a foreign correspondent has married a Russian woman and needs to smuggle her out of the Soviet Union. A null cipher is used in a radio broadcast. Originally published in Britain as “Come the Dawn.” Later made into a movie by MGM.

Contains a number cipher.

Contains an example of a book code. (Langen gives the publication date as 1936.)

Uses a code message.

Uses steganography (invisible ink).

Jack Gignillat and Jeanne Gaillard solve the centuries old cipher that leads to Peyre Gaillard’s treasure. The cipher is a double cryptogram where the initial work is a simple substitution cipher (remarkably like the cipher in Poe’s “The Gold Bug”) which yields a riddle in Gullah, the patois spoken in the low country of South Carolina. This edition by
the History Press is a reprint of the original 1906 edition with a new introduction.

A younger wife viciously controls her older husband, but before he dies he leaves clues to a new will in the made-up Latin names of the flowers in his rock-garden. The famous detective, Philip Trent, recognizes the made-up Latin and figures out the location of the hidden will. A very well written story with a nice twist. The linguistic puzzle, with references to Lewis Carroll is very clever.

Spy story about a German spy ring in England in the middle of WW2. Contains a cryptogram (215 letters; 43 five-letter groups) that is a transposition - by cipher group - of a simple mixed-alphabet monoalphabetic substitution cipher. The cipher gives away one of the spies, leading to the others.

When one-time Talmudic scholar and ex-CIA cryptanalyst Paul Nomberg takes a crack at deciphering the Ullman diary, he has no idea what he’s getting himself into. Asher Ullman, a doctor in the crematorium of a Polish concentration camp, was planning an uprising of the workers when he was evidently betrayed by a member of his own revolutionary committee -- someone who reportedly now holds an important position in the Israeli government. The coded -- perhaps in chess language -- diary indicates the location of a time capsule which contains the name of the informer.

A pretty standard spy story about a secret clause in the US Constitution, a secret organization of pirates, and an assassination plot. There’s a colonial cipher by Robert Patterson, a Jefferson cipher wheel cipher, and a discussion of Oak Island and it’s transposition cipher.

Uses an example of a musical cipher. Birmingham is a pseudonym of the Irish (Anglican) cleric Rev. James Owen Hannay.

Rick Brant’s father is trying to build a rocket to reach the moon. A large monetary prize has been offered for the first group able to do so and the Brant group is the leading contender. However, there are other groups in the chase and one of them is a criminal group that does everything it can to sabotage the Brant effort. The novel contains a book code.

A bad guy tries to instigate the Fascist takeover of Great Britain on the eve of World War
II. There is an example of a book code in the novel.

A collection of mystery stories all of which involve codes or ciphers. The book includes an excellent short introduction to cryptology. This original edition includes Dorothy Sayers’ story “The Learned Adventure of the Dragon’s Head” rather than “Code No. 2” by Edgar Wallace which is in the 1965 paperback edition.

A collection of mystery stories all of which involve codes of ciphers. The book includes an excellent introduction to cryptology. This edition includes “Code No. 2” by Edgar Wallace instead of the Dorothy Sayers’ story “The Learned Adventure of the Dragon’s Head” which is in the original 1947 hardcover edition.

Wizard’s private eyes don’t want any girls in their clubhouse. But a funny little man double-crosses the boys with a message in cipher (a monoalphabetic substitution). Then Marigold and her girlfriends get to show just how much the private eyes really need them. A very simple story and cipher aimed at the early elementary grades.

Disgraced cop Nick Noble decodes the Library of Congress call letters left by the murder victim and uncovers the killer. The Library of Congress call letters lead to the category that gives a hint to the identity of the murderer. A second cipher in a “typewriter code” where a plaintext letter is replaced with the one above it in the QWERTY keyboard pattern is also used for a spy ring of which the murderer is a member.

The Baker Street Irregulars, a group of Holmes enthusiasts, help solve the murder of a writer. Several clues turn up using three different ciphers. The first is a death threat using the Dancing Men cipher. The second is a book cipher variant that uses record albums instead of a book to give the location of an accomplice. And the third is an anagram, the dying man’s last message and his epitaph. The book is a clever, involved story with a couple of good discussions on elementary cryptanalytic techniques.

A series of intercepted cipher messages (both mono and polyalphabetic substitution) lead the Allies to believe that Rommel and the Wehrmacht want to surrender on D-Day. The Wehrmacht conspirators embed the key to the ciphers in a series of messages from the French resistance. There is good discussion of the discovery of the key and some short discussions about cryptanalyzing monoalphabetic ciphers. The decryptions of the messages is carried on behind the scene.

50. Brown, Dan. Digital Fortress. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998. An NSA cryptographer tries to break a seemingly unbreakable code that releases a worm that breaks down the firewall defenses of NSA’s secret supercomputer. The key is in a message left by a dying former NSA cryptologist who wrote the unbreakable cipher. The book is full of mistakes about cryptology and the NSA. One example is that the author consistently confuses 64 characters with 64 bits, as in a “64-character key”.

51. ———. The DaVinci Code. New York: Doubleday, 2003. To exonerate himself from a possible murder charge, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon works with French cryptologist Sophie Neveu to unravel a series of puzzles that lead to the Holy Grail. There are four rhyming riddles in the text, with only a single simple cipher as part of one of them. The cipher uses an atbash cipher message using the Hebrew alphabet to uncover a key to a locked cylinder containing the next clue.

52. ———. The Lost Symbol. New York, NY: Doubleday (Random House), 2009. Follow on to the DaVinci Code. Symbologist Robert Langdon searches for clues to a mystery in Washington, DC. Mystery involves the Masons, the architect of the U.S. Capitol, the designer of the layout of Washington, etc. Hey, there’s even a pigpen cipher in it. Not a very good book.


54. Brundidge, Harry T. “3-X The Man Behind the Gun.” American Mercury Magazine, April 1954. Mysterious coded messages appear at a New York newspaper threatening murder if the messages aren’t printed. The messages demand the return of coded documents. All the messages are signed “3-X The Man Behind the Gun”. After two murders, 3-X announces he has his documents and disappears.


Lady Ursula Blanchard Stannard decrypts a series of letters in a decimation cipher that uncover a plot to overthrow Queen Elizabeth I.


A collection of short stories featuring the Armenian seer, Astro. The book, originally published anonymously, identifies its author by means of a cryptogram embedded in the text. Astro has gathered about him the trappings of a psychic detective, but actually derives his power from superior, specialized knowledge and skill in logic. The ciphers are typical monoalphabetic substitutions, sometimes using different alphabets (e.g. Greek).


Ludovic Travers is given a sheet of music by a man who soon turns up dead. Deciphering the musical cipher leads to the killer.


A murder case that leads detective Ludovic Travers nearly around the globe. Contains a null cipher.


Princeton seniors decrypt a 500-year old manuscript that leads to a crypt full of ancient masterpieces. There are two different types of cipher in the book. The first uses riddles to uncover keywords that indicate which letters to pick out of each chapter of the book. The second uses the “Rule of Four” that gives directions for walking through the text and selecting letters in a route transposition.


Twenty years before the American Civil War, a young woman begins a journey as the new teacher in town. Soon, she’s in the middle of a dark mystery - should she reveal the Beale Cipher? What would the consequences be if she does - and who can she trust?


Candler writes an essay attempting to refute Mrs. Gallup's assertion that there are hidden messages from Bacon inside Shakespeare. Funny and satirical. Not fiction, but it does explain the biliteral cipher.


A kidnapped military genius (who’s actually a teenage girl) sends an encrypted message to friends on the outside in an effort to be rescued. The message uses steganography - the message is hidden in a digital picture - and a substitution cipher where the text is shifted.
two-byte Unicode characters. The message is a small, but critical part of the story.

On the night of his 25th birthday, the Starberth heir is found beneath a balcony with his neck broken. Dr. Gideon Fell must solve the murder to break the Starberth family curse. The cipher message uses beginning letters of certain words to form a message; these words are then replaced by equivalents and disguised as a poem.

Nick Carter, ace AXE agent, is loaned to the NSA, much to his disappointment, for a simple delivery job. He is to go to Athens with replacement rotors for a top secret crypto machine that has mysteriously stopped working. Along the way he’s hijacked, saddled with a CIA agent for a boss, dropped into the middle of a Greek resistance movement cell, and fighting Russians. All in a day’s work. There are no cryptograms in the novel, but there are some descriptions of the rotor machine.

Evelyn Erith, member of the E.C.D, recovers a code book and decrypts a cryptogram in book code that uncovers a German spy ring during WW1.

Actress Gail Loveless is initiated into the Union Secret Service during the American Civil War and is sent on a mission to spy on Confederate General Jeb Stuart. There she meets and falls in love with Confederate spy Jack Gaillard. Confusion ensues. Novel contains examples of secret inks and coded signals.

Mr. Keen, the Tracer of Lost Persons, solves a cipher that consists of rectangular symbols crossed with diagonals. The cipher turns out to be a monoalphabetic substitution where the symbols are crude representations of numbers. The numbers are mapped to letters using 1 = a, 2 = b, etc. to form the cipher system. Mr. Keen’s solution allows him to unite two lovers.


Three groups of potential heirs must follow a series of clues to their inheritance. Murder ensues. Logic and word puzzles included but no real crypto.

Miss Marple does it again, solving a book code message hidden in a letter and exposing an assassin. Flowers and a flower catalog provide the meaning of the code words.

73. ———. *They Came To Baghdad*. London: Collins Crime Club, 1951.


From Publisher’s Weekly: Historian and amateur sleuth Lucius Theocritus Westborough is called upon by the police, in the form of his longtime friend Chicago Lt. Johnny Mack, when Mack is stumped by the classic locked room murder of antique weapon collector Jonas Wright. Wright was found in his mansion’s weapons room, the apparent victim of a deadly blow from a halberd, but there was no obvious way for his killer to escape the room while leaving the door and windows still bolted. The field of suspects include the dead man’s three children, three men with designs on the daughter of the house, and a servant with a skeleton in her closet. The novel contains an example of a keyword monoalphabetic substitution cipher.


Story about a spy in Room 40. There are three cipher messages in the novel. the first is a transposition cipher, the second is a double transposition, and the third is a book code where each code word is the page number, line and word, but written backwards in the message.


The murder of the King’s messenger on a sleepy English train leads to drug rings, abduction and takes the reader from Scotland Yard to the Surete. Novel contains an example of a monoalphabetic key substitution cipher.


Colin Trent and Cyril Northfleet solve a clever transposition cipher that leads to smugglers and a fencing operation on a small island off the coast of Scotland. The text contains a very good description of how to cryptanalyze a complete rectangle transposition cipher.


Chief Detective Sir Clinton Driffield is called into a grisly double, triple, and then quadruple murder. One of the victims was the possible lover of one of the others. Two maids may have seen or heard too much are the other two victims. Is it murder/suicide? Is it a serial killer? The novel contains a couple of clues including coded newspaper messages and a simple substitution cipher.
Connington’s other detective, radio broadcaster Mark Brand (aka ‘The Counselor’), leaps into a multiple murder case with all his brash and arrogant style. The plot is complex and Brand is very clever, even employing an analytical chemist to analyze soil samples. The novel contains a good example of a ralifence transposition cipher.

Can’t find this book. Langen says it contains an example of usage of secret inks.

Really, really bad book on the end of the world as we know it. There’s a single cryptogram in it (a steganographic message where every 10th letter spells out the message) that does nearly nothing to move the plot along.

Professor Miller distributes a copy of a cryptogram enciphered using an Enigma (how he knows this we don’t know) for his four graduate seminar students to decipher. Twelve hours later, Miller, three of his students and two innocent bystanders are dead and the last remaining student is running for her life. This is how the new comic book series “Enigma Cipher” begins.

Continuing the saga of Casandra Williams as she tries to stay alive long enough to decrypt an Enigma cipher message and find out why unknown bad guys are trying to kill her. The comic is very dark, the story jumps around and leaves large plot holes, and the cryptography is weak.

The War of the Secret Agents is a poem about espionage, war, and people. Section XI is in a numeric cipher.

This is the second of the Inspector French novels. There are kidnappings, gangs of criminals, murder attempts, robberies, ciphers, and a treasure trove at the end of it all. There is plenty of action and Inspector French wraps things up nicely at the end. The novel contains a null cipher.

In the Hatton Garden district of London, a jewelry store safe is open, the head clerk is dead, and all the jewels are gone. This is how Inspector Joseph French’s first and greatest (well, maybe) case begins. A classic police procedural, a bit plodding at times, but good
in the end. The novel contains a cipher message that uses stock exchange symbols in the message.

In Crowley’s novel, Ada Lovelace enciphers a novel written by her father, Lord Byron, into a kind of code in order to keep it from her mother. Fast forward 175 years, and the second half consists of the contemporary discovery of Ada’s notes on Byron’s story by researcher Alexandra Novak. Deciphering the novel occupies us for the rest.

The Maples is a secluded estate north of New York along the Hudson River. It is the home of the powerful Coldfield clan, which recently has several questions to answer. Why did Glendon Coldfield suddenly commit suicide? Why is his widow held prisoner in an upstairs bedroom? What clues are contained in a carefully ordered crossword puzzle? The answers lay hidden in letters from the past; letters whose message is danger, adultery, and hatred. The younger Mrs. Coldfield has only one chance to get a message to detective Henry Gamadge. She doesn’t know what her in-laws have planned for her since her husband’s death, and Gamadge must ferrit out the truth. The novel also contains a transposition cipher.

Dorothy Martin’s good friend Bill is found dead, in the local museum, his assistant is beaten to within an inch of death, and it’s up to Dorothy to decipher the message that might lead to the perpetrator. The message Bill was grasping in his hand turns out to be a code message that talks about air raids - and is obviously sent by a spy to a German contact in England. The message is decoded by an ex-MI5 type and provides another clue into a war-time conspiracy that only comes to light forty years later - and to the widow who will do anything to preserve the reputation of her dead husband, and who thinks the now septuagenarian conspirators should pay. Not much crypto in the novel, the key scene in the decryption is pretty anti-climactic. No discussion of the type of code, etc.

Originally written in 1939. The story uses a substitution cipher with Morse Code. No other information is available.

In the countryside near Doylestown, PA, a doctor and a young mathematician, are brought together by the State Department during WW2 to create an indecipherable cipher for war use. Danger hovers, striking twice to prevent their success. Two of the doctor’s previous assistants are murdered by one of the stranded house guests; there are suspects galore, for the work is going on in the midst of a strangely assorted snowbound houseparty. The novel contains a monoalphabetic substitution cipher that the doctor uses to test the skills of the mathematician. There are are also several discussions about
cryptology (including mention of Herbert Yardley and the American Black Chamber) and cryptanalysis. Davis gets a few minor things wrong; for example, he says that the Playfair cipher is three hundred years old. (It was invented by Charles Wheatstone in 1854 and popularized by Lord Playfair.) As part of his research for the novel Davis must have read “The American Black Chamber” and correctly states that difficult ciphers must eliminate repetitions in the ciphertext, but he’s obviously not heard of the Vernam cipher at this point.

U.S. Federal Treasury agent Julian Napier is sent to San Antonio, hot on the trail of diamond smugglers. The novel contains two instances where Napier uses a code book to decipher coded telegrams from his boss. The code book is not identified, and neither the original coded telegrams nor the process of the decryption are included.

Really bad novel about WW1. Erroneously puts the Signal Corps in the Navy. Consistently mis-spells Vigenere as Viginire. One Playfair cipher that doesn’t use a keyword. Lots of Christian overtones that don’t add anything to the story. Emma Shuster is a math major from Vassar whose father - who teaches at Bowdoin is murdered for his cipher machine. Machine is not described at all, but is supposed to be able to decrypt random German ciphers. Most of the discussion of ciphers is about simple German Vigenere ciphers. Riverbank labs is mentioned once (and too early - this novel takes place in 1915). The author did not do her homework on ciphers or the history of WW1 at all.

Zoe Bennett feels lost at her fancy private school. She’s not the star drama queen like her sister, or a brainiac math genius like her brother. Luckily her best friend, Dara, is just as content as Zoe is to stay in the shadows -- or is she? When Dara gets a part in the school musical, Zoe feels abandoned. What’s worse, Zoe’s practically being stalked by the weird new kid, Lucas. Then Lucas accidentally drops his notebook and Zoe finds it’s written in symbols and numbers -- it’s complete gibberish. Yet she sees her name in there, plain as day. Now Lucas is telling her she’s a natural code-reading genius -- or some kind of mental freak. As Zoe’s daydreaming lands her in trouble at school, anonymous notes start to appear in students’ lockers, and Zoe is the number one suspect. Solving word puzzles may come easily to her, but now there’s more at stake -- will Zoe be able to solve her way out of this? With plenty of wit and insight, Barbara Dee has created this fresh, funny story of a girl who discovers that fitting in sometimes means standing out.

A series of cryptograms (all in various monoalphabetic ciphers) uncovers the secrets of the life of the late Pemberton Pomeroy. Chapters VII and VIII describe the first set of cryptograms and provides a nice description of frequency analysis and decrypting monoalphabetic substitution ciphers. Chapter LXXVII gives the details of the final cryptogram solution. Most of the original cryptograms themselves are not shown.
Deaf Mr. Nicholas Quinn stumbles on a cheating conspiracy at the Foreign Examinations Syndicate and pays for it with his life whilst drinking a glass of cyanide-laced sherry. A letter with a secret message embedded in it is the clue to the reason for Mr. Quinn’s murder. The message is read by extracting the far right-hand word of each line of the letter.

Fifty limericks in cipher. Includes “The Gold Bug” to give the reader instructions on crytanalysis. All the limericks use monoalphabetic substitutions embedded in the rhyme.

While a battle between the army of Alexander the Great and the Persians rages, both sides try to decipher a mysterious manuscript by Pythias, the architect of the walls around Halicarnassus, in which he supposedly reveals a secret weakness in the walls and the location of a treasure. Scribes and cryptographers work non-stop, the breaking of the code providing an underlying motive for a series of murders which take place within the battle drama.

Sir Hugh Corbett, King Edward I’s cryptographer, is sent to Corfe Castle to meet with French cryptographers to decrypt a volume of Sir Roger Bacon’s works. One by one the French scholars begin to die mysterious deaths. Sir Hugh must uncover the murderers and stop the French from deciphering the Bacon text on their own. No real cryptograms here, but some discussion of Baconian stuff.


The latest cipher system is stolen from a Royal Navy cruiser. A retired naval officer works on the case. A Vigenere cipher message is included in the novel.

105. Dos Santos, Jose Rodrigues. *Codex 632: The Secret Identity of Christopher*
Historian Thomas Noronha is employed by the shadowy American History Foundation to finish the research of now dead scholar Martinho Toscano on the discovery of Brazil. Thomas travels to New York, Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy running down clues found in Toscano’s notes, some of which are enciphered. We encounter permutations, book codes, and substitution ciphers. Like the daVinci Code, the book is short on crypto and long on puzzles and very long monologues on the history of Portugal, Brazil, and the various ways Christopher Columbus hid his background.

Portuguese Professor Thomas Noronha is back and this time he’s trying to decipher “The God Formula”, an unpublished manuscript by Albert Einstein that has been stolen by the Iranians and may lead to world-wide destruction. It’s actually a “proof” for the existence of God. There are two short transposition ciphers and a double-enciphered substitution cipher (for which Thomas is given the keys). The substitution cipher starts with a two-alphabet polyalphabetic and the resulting decryption is in an atbash cipher.

This is the prequel to Magnificent Obsession and contains the same railfence cipher that is in the first novel.

The novel tells the story of Robert Merrick, a neurosurgeon who is given the secret journal of his mentor, Dr. Hudson. The journal is written in script in a railfence cipher, which is solved by the young neurosurgeon and sets him on his life’s work. The novel is a classic of popular fiction from the first third of the twentieth century. The cipher is never named as a “railfence” and the entire cryptanalysis relies on an “Aha!” moment by Dr. Merrick. The system also uses the Greek letters mu and omega to indicate line breaks (omega) and where to split the railfence into two lines (mu) in the ciphered journal entries.

An Italian couple in London use a simple cipher with lights to communicate across a street. In the cipher, one flash equals A, two flashes equals B, three flashes equals C, etc. Cumbersome but doable. It takes Holmes about ten seconds to figure it out.

Sherlock Holmes solves a case involving a series of mysterious messages - a bit late to save his client. The messages are in a simple substitution cipher, using stick figures as the cipher letters. One quirk is the use of “flags” to indicate word stops. The symbols are sometimes hard to distinguish, and there are some errors in the messages as documented in Kahn’s “The Codebreakers” (page 797).

An old school friend of Holmes’ calls him down to his country home to solve the mystery of his father’s death. Trevor’s father dies of despair after being blackmailed. A note in which every third letter reveals a cipher message and which says “The game is up, Hudson has told all. Fly for your life.” pushes the old man over the edge.

Holmes solves a message in a book cipher that uses an almanac as its key. From just the single message plus a follow-up letter begging him to destroy the message, Holmes deduces the book used for the cipher and decrypts the message.

Magician/alchemist apprentice Alfeo Zeno helps to catch a spy in the famous Venitian ruling Council of Ten. There’s a Vigenere cipher to solve that helps lead to the spy.

A message supposedly in a cipher by Johannes Trithemius starts a quest for a secret plan set in motion by the Knights Templar. The message decodes differently using different cipher systems, including a cipher disk. Baconians show up as well.

Detective Inspector Hannah Scarlett and historian Daniel Kind combine to solve the cold case murder of the philandering Warren Howe. An unexpected twist at the end makes the novel interesting. The only cipher is in fact, Daniel’s garden, which helps him in his pursuit of the history of his new cottage in the Lake district, but has absolutely nothing to do with the mystery.

Kate and Alex Sheppard discover a unique blue rose in the garden of their newly acquired house. The value of the blue rose leads to a mad scramble to steal it. The deaths of a friend and the nephew of the man who developed the rose make the rose a dangerous possession. The notes kept by the developer are encrypted - he worked at Bletchley Park during WWII and kept all his journals in code. Kate and Alex’s friend Laurence Kingston (happily, a botanist specializing in roses), takes the journals to the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre at Chicksands, Bedfordshire where they are decrypted, yielding the formula for hybridizing the blue rose. The author, Eglin, makes the mistake of saying that the Colossus computer built by Tommy Flowers was used to decrypt Enigma messages. In fact, Colossus was only used on the “Fish” messages enciphered by the Lorenz Z42 cipher machine.

Supposedly gives an example of the use of code words. Not confirmed yet.

While imprisoned, Pod and Bende use Morse code to communicate. Not really cryptograms here.

A short novel for elementary school children. Trying to solve enciphered messages (monoalphabetic substitutions) leads the Critter Kids to a new member for their club.

In the course of a murder and blackmail investigation we find a bit of steganography in the form of invisible ink, and a simple substitution cipher that reveals how to open a hollow cane containing a fortune in jewels.

From Kirkus Reviews: Jewel thieves, an old mine, coded messages--these are familiar landmarks to mystery readers, but the eager ones will find them worth travelling again in this version. It all takes place in North Carolina, and there are some pleasant descriptions of local color. Paul is staying there with his aunt and uncle, recuperating from the automobile accident that crippled him and destroyed his hopes for a career in football. Helping to bring him out of his despondency is Abby, who is intent on finding some sort of treasure to finance music school. And then there is her friend Luke, who seems quite nasty but is really just reacting to his father’s drunkenness and mental illness. The trio discovers that some city slicker visitors are sending each other mysterious notes wrapped up in half-smoked cigars. A geology professor, who keeps spouting the wisdom of the local rocks, pieces them together as part of a map. From this evidence the kids are able to figure out that the two visitors, disguised in tinted contact lenses, have hidden a valuable star ruby in a deserted ruby mine. There’s nothing terribly puzzling, but the story is attention-holding. The author has written many books for this age level, mainly historical fiction.

A group of young people visiting in a posh house. A ghostly prank. An accidental shooting. "In the bottom drawer of the bureau was a locked attache case. The lock was a most peculiar one. Un-pickable, Pointer fancied. Unlocking it with one of the keys on Ingram’s bunch, he found it chiefly filled with books neatly strapped together and three piles of manuscripts. The first was on Baphomet of the Templars. The second consisted of the first seven chapters of a book on The Law of Rationality of Indices. The third was the first volume, finished apparently, of a work on cryptography. It dealt exclusively with ciphers. Ingram seemed to be just finishing an exposition of Dr. Blair’s clever three dot system with sidelights on an adaptation of the A.B.C. system in use during the war. He stood awhile looking down at the pages. They seemed to have been proof-read by some other hand, a sprawling, rather smudged hand. Apparently the bundle was just about to be sent off to the publishers. . . . He examined the books. They were works on ciphers, such
as that of Andrew Langie Katscher, there was one on Lord Bacon’s famous two-letter cipher, a copy of Bacon’s De Augmentis . . . and many others, mostly on the same subject, or on some mathematical point. He also found, last of all, two dictionaries, one a Chambers, one a Nuttall’s. Opening them he found beside many words a dot or a collection of dots. The compiler of a cryptogram might well have made them. That was all!

"It looks like poor Charles Ingram was killed because he had (invented?) a new type of cipher. But actually he was killed for his system of writing and solving crossword puzzles. No cryptograms and only brief discussions of ciphers like the one above.


126. Follett, Ken. *The Key To Rebecca*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1980. Major William Vandam is tracking a German spy in Cairo. During World War II, Alex Wolff sneaks into Cairo determined to get the information Rommel needs to stop the English in the North African desert. Wolff is using Daphne duMaurier’s novel “Rebecca” to generate a key stream that acts like a Vernam one-time pad. Taking the last two digits of the year, and adding the day of the month gets the page to use as the key. The number of the current month tells which characters to ignore. One then starts at the top of the page and looks for the first occurrence of the first plaintext character. The index of this character is the index of the first ciphertext letter. For example, if H is the first plaintext letter and the first H on the page is the tenth letter in the book (ignoring every Nth character if you’re in the Nth month), you use a J (the tenth letter of the alphabet) as the first ciphertext letter. If A is the next plaintext letter, and the next A in the book text is the sixth letter after the H, then the next cipher text letter is F.


128. ———. “The Moabite Cipher.” In *Dr. Thorndyke Cases*, 151–73. New York: Dover, 1909. Dr. Thorndyke uncovers a hidden message underneath what appears to be a cipher (but isn’t) to solve a robbery and capture the members of the burglary ring. What appears to be a substitution cipher turns out to be steganography (the message is written in invisible ink across the “cipher”). The story leads the reader to believe right up till the end that the cipher message is real.

129. ———. “The Puzzle Lock.” In *The Dr. Thorndyke Omnibus*, 1–35. New York:
Dodd, Mead & Co., 1927.
Dr. Thorndyke must solve a chronogram to escape from a safe containing stolen goods and a corpse. The key to the 15 digit puzzle hinges on the Roman numerals hidden in a short poem inscribed on a bracelet worn by the victim.

Not fiction, but Friedman’s exposition of Poe’s work in cryptology, including his essays, cryptographic challenges, and fiction.

From Chapter XVII, “‘Cipher!’ he exclaimed. It was undoubtedly cipher, but whether a simple or abstruse one Foyle was in no position to judge. He had an elementary knowledge of the subject, but he had no intention of attempting to solve it by himself. There were always experts to whom appeal could be made. A successful detective, like a successful journalist, is a man who knows the value of specialists—who knows where to go for the information he wants. That meaningless jumble of letters could only be juggled into sense by an expert. Foyle nevertheless scrutinised them closely, more as a matter of habit than of reading anything from them. They were— UJQW. BJNT. FJ. UJM. FJTV. UIYIQL. SK. DQUQZOKKEYJPK. ANUJ. M.Q. NG. N. AYUQNQIX. IGZ. ANUJ. SIO. IGZ. SMPN. RT. 12845 HGZVFSF. “The cipher uses a repeating numeric key that gives the count of how many letters down from the plaintext letter is the next ciphertext letter. See Chapter XXIX. (Book is also in Project Gutenberg) Cipher is a Gronsfeld.

The American Secret Service tries to break up a spy ring (really a plot by the Italian secret service). The novel contains messages in invisible ink (milk-based) and a cryptogram transmitted in Morse code (but the cryptogram is never deciphered in the novel), and also a mention of a “Secret Service code”.

The famous scientist and detective known as The Thinking Machine unravels the mystery of an inventor’s apparent suicide. The suicide note is a cipher where each plaintext word is five words further on than the last. The story takes a couple of surprising twists.

The Thinking Machine accepts a challenge to break out of a prison cell within a week. The story was originally published in the Boston American newspaper and later (in 1907) in the story collection “The Thinking Machine”. The story contains a bit of steganography and a simple transposition cipher.

Three con men try to convince the Duke de Champdoce and his former lover, Diana the Countess of Mussidan, that one of them is their long lost illegitimate son. Part of their
“proof” is a cipher message - a message in French written backwards (so it’s technically a transposition cipher) in which the Countess begs the Duke to see her son again. The cipher is read in “Caught in the Net” but the story doesn’t conclude until the end of the sequel, “The Mystery of Champdoce” when the real son is found.


137. Garden, Nancy. *Mystery of The Secret Marks*. Monster Hunters, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989. Darcy, Brian, and Numbles, the Monster Hunters, must find the people involved in the harrassment of Darcy’s roommate, Ro. The only clues are a series of cipher messages made entirely of X’s and O’s. The messages are a simple substitution cipher where a plaintext letter is replaced by a variable number of X’s and O’s. For example, A = X, B = O, C = XX, D = OO, E = XXO, F = OOX, etc.


143. Gordon, Alex. *The Cipher*. New York: Grove Press, 1961. Novel from which the movie “Arabesque” is derived. Milquetoast college professor Philip Hoag is engaged by a shady foreign businessman to decipher a telegram. The telegram discloses a plot by the businessman and an ambassador to assassinate their country’s prime minister. No real details of the cipher are given; it’s probably a super-enciphered Vigenere.

An old, dark mansion, homocide, a hidden family treasure, and a set of mysterious clues - all misquotations from Shakespeare - lead to a jolly good mystery. The novel includes a book code.

The Shadow deals a blow to Crime Incorporated. The story contains a cryptogram using a monoalphabetic substitution cipher.

The Shadow once again comes up against Crime, Inc. The story contains a bit of steganography in the form of a hidden message written around the edges of a deck of cards. When the deck is shuffled the message disappears; when the deck is back in the right order, it reappears.

A murder, a stolen cigarette case, a coded message that leads to a hidden treasure. The Shadow must solve the coded message to stop the murderer from killing again. “Such ordinary items as letter frequency had not concerned The Shadow long. Fribbs had covered that ground. The Shadow, was looking for artifices; points that made this cryptogram different from ordinary ones. His first thought concerned spacings. They would be needed in this blocky code. Off to the extreme right were four blocks, one for each line, all of which were blank. They could mean spaces, particularly since a word might end on the first line; and certainly a word would mark the finish of the fourth line. Despite the fact that spaces might be unnecessary at the ends of lines, The Shadow held to this idea. He could see that this code was a simple one; almost crude, once its basic system was known. It had been fashioned in painstaking manner. It was not a code used in regular correspondence; it had been used to carry a single message.” The cipher message is a simple monoalphabetic substitution with the ciphertext arranged in blocks of letters rather than divided by words or in five-letter groups.

The Shadow breaks up a smuggling ring. The novel contains a monoalphabetic substitution cipher.

The Shadow takes on his most nefarious enemy - the Wizard of Crime! The story includes a simple transposition cipher and a “visual cipher” where the Shadow signals one of his henchmen with his eyes using a complicated cipher while both are tied up by the Wizard’s minions.

Claudius breaks a book cipher invented by Augustus and is able to decipher a number of criminal dossiers encrypted in the cipher. Claudius is able to break the cipher because he finds the book! The first one hundred lines of the Iliad in Greek are used to encipher the dossiers. Claudius also mentions a simple Caesar cipher. Neither of these ciphers is more
than a trivial part of the plot of the novel.

A tale of murder, bigamy, and blackmail. Miss Saunders, the companion of the mayor’s wife, helps capture the blackmailer by solving several monoalphabetic substitution cipher messages. The messages use a pigpen cipher that is used to communicate between the blackmailer and his victim. Miss Saunders has five messages, with a total of 150 characters, to work with. She uses “The Gold Bug” as her source of cryptanalytic information and makes reference to it many times during her solution. A twist in the pigpen cipher is that the symbols are turned 90 degrees counterclockwise for every word enciphered.

MI6 is looking for a mole who is sending coded messages to Moscow. Maurice Castle is a thirty-plus year employee of MI6 whose speciality is South Africa. He has a wife and a child, no bad habits, no debts, and no secrets. So why does he always go to the same bookstore in London and always buy two copies of certain classic novels? The novel uses a book code for several cryptograms and a talks about a one-time pad.

Sherlock Holmes solves a grille cipher to help end World War I. The cipher messages are being exchanged between the President of the United States and the Chancellor of Germany in a effort to broker an armistice. The untimely illness of the chancellor requires Holmes’ services to solve the last message. The cipher uses dummy words and leaves out the vowels to further obscure the message. The story, a follow-on Holmes piece, take place in November, 1918.

The novel contains a dictionary book code. (Not confirmed.)

A set of encrypted letters that reveal the location of an unknown Shakespearean play are the centerpiece of this novel. Jake Mishkin, attorney, son of a mobster and brother of a supermodel is the central character in the appearance and disappearance of the letters and the manuscript. Good descriptions of different ciphering methods and cryptanalytic techniques. Erroneously calls the Babbage-Kasiski method the “Kasiski-Kerckhoff Method” (page 207). the letters turn out to be enciphered using a grille cipher, the result of which is a Vigenere; their contents lead to the Shakespeare manuscript.

A detective fiction novelist tries to solve three murders, a millionaire, a young physician, and a famous surgeon, each killed in a different way. The story features a monoalphabetic substitution cipher. See Chapter 12, “The Cryptogram.”

Colonel Quaritch deciphers the dying note of Sir James de la Molle. The note gives a hint to the location of the family treasure that old Sir James buried to save from Cromwell’s men. The cipher is hidden in the knight’s last message and is deciphered by taking the first letter of every fifth word in the note. The Colonel comes upon the solution purely by chance - he’s looking at the note in a poor light without his glasses and focuses on the right letters. The discovery of the treasure enables the Colonel to marry his lady love.

A series of cryptograms warn The Puzzle Lady, Cora Felton, not to marry her latest beau. When the fiance is murdered, more messages uncover a drug smuggling ring. The messages are in a mixed alphabet monoalphabetic substitution and in a rectangular transposition cipher.

Actually written by Halliday’s wife - the mystery writer Helen McCloy (“Panic”). The first of several short stories that contain cryptograms. Detective Mike Shayne solves a murder.

Mike Shayne must solve a cipher message in order to prevent the next in a series of murders - and he may be the victim! The cipher is a null type cipher where the plaintext message is hidden in the cryptogram as the last letter of each word in the message.

Ms. Hatfield, the pizza delivery girl, decrypts a cipher built into an RNA specimen. The message is a double encipherment of an RNA sequence, where the nucleides (G, U, A, and C) define amino acids. Each of the 20 amino acids then represents a letter of the alphabet in a simple monoalphabetic substitution. The message is used in a patent hearing to verify the author and authenticity of the RNA specimen. The pizza delivery girl is used to show that the cipher message is easy enough for a knowledgeable amateur to solve.

Really bad book about intrigue inside the NSA, post 9/11.

On board a trans-Pacific liner, a whack on the head kills one traveler, another dies suspiciously, and detective Fowler, has a nice problem. Smuggled jewels, man of mystery. A cryptogram, and comic lady enliven a rather pedestrian shipboard tale. Novel
contains a book code.

164. Harris, Robert. *Enigma*. New York: Random House, 1995. Bletchley Park cryptanalyst Tom Jericho stumbles on a missing girlfriend, stolen cryptograms, and possible Nazi spies while trying to solve a new four-rotor Enigma machine before Allied convoys are decimated. This book was also made into a movie of the same name. There is not much in the way of ciphers in the novel. There is a decent description of the Enigma, but it’s incomplete. A brief and very incomplete description of the bombes is also given. The story does give one a feel for how the cryptanalysts had to work at Bletchley Park. The novel is far-fetched, but well written.

165. Harrison, Harry. “The Mothballed Spaceship.” In *Stainless Steel Visions*, pp. 53–72. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, Inc., 1993. Jason dinAIt and his friends have 30 days to figure out the “unmothballing code” for a space battleship. Ten digits long, it turns out to be the numeric values of the Esperanto word “Haltu” 0801122021, so it’s a simple substitution with A=01, B=02, ...


168. Heard, H. F. *Reply Paid*. New York: The Vanguard Press, 1942. Heard’s second novel with the touchy, conceited Sidney Silchester, and his ponderous mentor, Myles Mycroft (A Taste for Honey) as they work together, not always amicably, on the race for an invaluable mineral, whose location is hidden in a death rewarding code. (from Kirkus Reviews)

169. Hendrix, Howard V. *The Labyrinth Key*. New York: Del Rey Books, 2004. The race is on between the US and China for the development of the first viable quantum computer. Dr Jaron Kwok, an American of Chinese descent, who is key to the American effort, is found as a pile of dust in an Hong Kong hotel room. The NSA and the Chinese Department of State Security are soon involved. No cryptograms in the novel, but lots of discussion of the NSA, ciphers and quantum computing.

reporter to find the key. The code depends on knowing the second half of several colloquial phrases, as in "foregone conclusion.


Twelve-year-old Alvin and his best friend Shoie use their knowledge of codes and ciphers to solve a dangerous mystery. The story describes simple monoalphabetic substitution and transposition ciphers via a skytale. Mr. Link, Alvin’s friend, teaches Alvin and Shoie about skytales and simple monoalphabetic substitutions. Alvin puts his new knowledge to good use deciphering a Caesar cipher Mr. Link throws out his window. The message tells Alvin that Mr. Link and his housekeeper are being held prisoner by a burglar.


Holmes solves a theft and murder. The cipher is a mirror image message left in the sand alongside a body on the banks of the Thames.


A collection of spy short stories all involving the same main character, British spy and head of cryptographic services, Jeremy Rand. Several of the stories involve the solution of puzzles and ciphers.


British spy Rand solves a book cipher that uses clocks and the Encyclopedia Britannica as the “book” to uncover a murderer and a spy.


British spy and cryptographer Rand and his co-workers decrypt a mixed alphabet monoalphabetic substitution cipher that was written in invisible ink on a Christmas present. The cipher leads to a terrorist bomb.


British spy Rand solves a monoalphabetic substitution cipher that uses dates as the keys to solve a murder and catch a spy.


Book containing seven (7) Jeffery Rand spy stories and seven (7) Nick Velvet mysteries. Several of the Rand stories contain cryptograms as part of each story. The Rand stories with cryptograms or references to crypto systems in them are “The Spy Who Had Faith in Double-C”, “The Spy Who Came To The End of The Road,” and “The Spy Who Purchased A Lavender.”
British spy and cryptographer Rand uncovers a double agent by solving a unique transposition cipher made from a typewriter ribbon.

British spy and cryptographer Rand and his girlfriend Leila foil Russian spies at the pyramid of Cheops. The spies communicate via a transposition cipher using a model pyramid as the key to a skytale.

Jeffery Rand catches a spy from the WW II era who is now freelancing. The cryptogram in the story is a simple piece of steganography where the first letter of each word in a telegram forms the real message.

Another Jeffery Rand story. Need to find it to get the cryptosystem.

Jeffery Rand must decode the last message of a now deceased medical missionary who also provided information to the Department of Concealed Communications. The cryptogram is a coded message “Father come our art in is earth bread.” The cipher uses phrases from the Bible to produce a 26-letter cipher alphabet that uses words to represent single letters. In this case the the phrase comes from the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer, with duplicates removed.

Jeffery Rand breaks a smuggling spy ring that is attempting to steal an American Lavender cipher machine. “The Lavender Machine could be described as an outgrowth of the famous Japanese Purple Machine of World War II, but actually it is much closer in concept to the American SIGABA, the German ENIGMA, and our own TYPEX.” Rand’s colleague in the investigation of a missing Lavender machine is murdered and the only clue is a one word message JOKE. Rand figures out that his colleague was using the International Code of Signals (the pre 1969 edition) and uncovers the identity of the murderer.

Martin Dime defected to the Russians five years before the beginning of this story. Everyone thought him a traitor, but there was no evidence to prove it. Now he’s coming
back to London to work for world peace. Jeffery Rand is told to examine all of the speeches Dime gave in the eighteen months before his defection to see if there are any hidden messages in them. Rand finds a Cardano grille cipher that produces messages in many of the speeches and the fun begins.

Doomed agent Pete Traynor leaves the location of an island that houses a spy ring encoded in a watercolor painting. Steganography and a puzzle reveal the latitude and longitude of the island.

The Holland kids decipher a Caesar cipher found in an old diary and uncover the hiding place of a long lost collection of rare coins.

David Schumacher, the Blue Avenger, a teenage superhero, researches who really wrote Shakespeare’s plays, explains and solves some Bacon bi-literal ciphers. Deciphers a book cipher message and helps his best friend recover the copyright to his video game invention.

In Chapter II, “The First Customer and the Florentine Dante”, newly ensconced pawn shop operator Hagar decrypts a book code (that turns into a null cipher) and finds the “treasure” of his uncle’s inheritance for Eustace Lorn, and her eventual love.

A dying man scrawls a clue to his murderer in his own blood on his arm in a pigpen cipher. The clue (which also includes a drawing of a lizard) leads to an address book and the ultimate identity of the killer.

Cyrus and Gertrude, two young lovers, must find out who killed Mrs. Caldershaw and stole her glass eye in order to clear themselves. Alas, the eye (and the cipher engraved on the back side) keeps on disappearing and reappearing all over southern England. The cipher is really a puzzle diagram that gives instructions on how to find a treasure in diamonds - Gertrude’s inheritance.

A hard-boiled detective finds a possible blackmailer dead with a knife in her. Two more deaths follow. What is going on? The key may lie in a cryptogram. A good discussion of transposition ciphers is included.
Mr. Somerton uncovers a cryptogram under some paint on a set of stained-glass windows. Solving the transposition cipher he goes in search of Abbot Thomas’ gold and is scared out of his wits.

Heroine Jane Strong helps decipher coded messages and break up a German spy ring that is communicating ship convoy information during World War I. The novel uses two types of cipher, a book code that uses an almanac as the book, and a null-type cipher that uses the length of the first word of an advertisement for dental cream to give the count for a message hidden in the ad. (e.g. REMEMBER is 8 letters long, so one extracts every eighth letter in the ad to recover the hidden message).

Bob LeBaron and his new wife Betty’s honeymoon at the swanky Hotel Ritsmore begins badly when a young woman, stabbed through the heart, falls out of their bedroom wardrobe. The novel uses a book code.

Socialite, war hero, and bon vivant James Waddington Hurd learns of his ownership of the old family estate in upstate New York on his twenty-fifth birthday. Traveling there he becomes embroiled in working out the terms of his great-grandfather’s forty-year-old will, which will disinherit his great-uncles in eight days if they don’t reconcile. He also becomes interested in finding the “Waddington jewels”, a treasure hidden by his great-grandfather and hinted at in the will, but as yet undiscovered. The cipher in the title is a poem in the will that points to three gold chain-links that give instructions for finding the jewels.

The novel contains a null cipher (no confirmation yet).

Sixteen-year-old Kay Tracey is an intelligent detective in the mold of Nancy Drew. In The Mysterious Neighbors Kay is on vacation on a houseboat with two of her friends. They are being trailed by a sinister black boat and that leads them into a serious mystery. In this novel a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher is used.

An adventure tale of the Barbary pirates. The story contains a message written in invisible ink.

The young and dedicated chief inspector of police in a university town has his work cut out for him when he finds himself in the middle of a murder case in which four of the five victims were German refugees - and one of them was engaged in secret biological research. To make matters worse, ciphered messages suggesting spy activities are found near the scene of the crime. The cipher used is a Vigenere that uses an agenda for the key phrases. The plaintext messages were enciphered using the inspirational phrases on each page of the agenda as the key phrase. The ciphertext was then converted into numbers to further hide the meaning of the message.


Chinese and Japanese gangs are struggling for control in America. The thirteenth coin of Confucius will decide the winner. However, it has been stolen and is now sewn into an overcoat. But which overcoat? There seem to be a lot of them in this novel. Also involved in the labyrinthine plot are missing fingers-two of them-a literary con artist and his long-winded employee, and a host of other odd characters. The novel contains a good example of a Caesar monoalphabetic substitution cipher.


Jake Jenningw is willing to pay a small fortune for the return of his wife’s Yellow Zuri (an Indian Tiger Snake). Cliff Carson is eager to help. And that’s where the mystery begins. Story contains a null cipher.


Jerome Middleton is in the middle of a plot to defraud him of his $10 million inheritance and kill him in the process. Middleton is committed to an insane asylum (by the plotters) for being paranoid. So here’s his problem. He is committed for being paranoid and he’s trying to convince the doctors that he’s sane AND that there really are people plotting against him. Oh, and to get his $10 million, Middleton must wear a pair of blue goggles (the spectacles) for a year, just so he can read an invisible ink message that is only visible through the blue lenses.


Nancy Drew is drawn into the mystery of strange tapping in the house of Miss Carter, a retired actress and cat fancier. The tapping turns out to be in Morse code and Nancy must discover how the tapper gets into the securely locked house. No real cryptograms here, but Nancy must decipher the Morse code and figure out the meaning of the messages.


New Nancy Drew mysteries. Nancy is in Paris on a reality show called Mystery Solved! and runs into another real mystery. There are several anagrams (transposition cipher) and a Caesar cipher message in the story.
Nancy and friends journey to South America to solve a puzzle, discover an ancient treasure and foil a smuggling ring. The puzzle is written in letters on an ancient wooden plaque in the form of a simple crossword. While some of the words have been worn off, enough remain for Nancy to read them and figure out the clues.

Captain Duncan Maclain is a private detective (and in the original story a government agent) who is called in - by the mother - to help break up a May-December romance between a 17-year old girl and a 50-year old actor. It turns out that the girls father is working on a top-secret government project that the Nazis would love to get their hands on. A good combination of a puzzle mystery and a spy story. The story contains a null cipher - and a dog.

Mathematician/historian Melanie Prescott is drawn into a real-live version of the online role-playing game “Play-Survive-Win”. She’s the target and an assassin, Lynx, is really trying to kill her on the streets of Manhattan. To win the game - and survive - Melanie has to evade Lynx and solve a series of coded messages to reach a final destination before she’s killed. The messages include several puzzles, a pigpen cipher, an Enigma message, and a book cipher.

In the process of finding antiques to sell, Trixie discovers a key in the attic and its attached tag has a enciphered message upon it. After cracking the cipher the Trixie’s club adopts it as their own. The cipher is a monoalphabetic substitution using stick figures to represent letters, similar to the cipher in the Adventure of the Dancing Men.

To help an old friend down on his luck, Karmesin creates a cipher message to prove that Francis Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare. The cipher is in the form of a sonnet that gives clues for the reader to extract certain letters from Hamlet’s soliloquy. The letters form the message “Bacon wrote this tragedie.”

A mystery set in post-war Germany. Contains an excellent example of a phonetic cipher.

This was the first of King’s novels and the first of his ‘Obelist’ trilogy, all of which combine murder, travel and psychiatry. It is set on a luxury transatlantic liner traveling
from New York to Cherbourg. One evening lightning shorts out the generator and the first class smoking lounge is plunged into darkness. While the lights are out a shot is fired and when they return, self-made millionaire Victor Smith is dead, his female companion’s pearl necklace has been stolen and another man, a shady lawyer, is literally holding a smoking gun. But nothing is what it seems. Indeed it turns out that Smith has not one but two bullets inside him, one immediately on top of the other, even though only one shot was heard – and neither has been fired from the lawyer’s gun. The twist here is that there is not one detective but four - four psychologists, each of whom is pretty incompetent as a detective. The novel contains a transposition cipher.

Isaac Inchbold, a London bookseller, is commissioned by a widowed woman to recover a rare text that was stolen from her father’s mansion during the English Civil War. As Inchbold soon discovers, what appears to be a search for a significant literary work soon becomes a dangerous quest to stay one step ahead of a trio of killers and other political agents who are seeking this same ancient prize. A Vigenere cipher provides a clue to the whereabouts of the manuscript.

The novel contains a transposition cipher. The cipher is on pages 121 and 124 and the solution is on page 304.

Egyptologist Thomas McAllister is on the trail of the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, so is the US government. McAllister must elude a dogged FBI agent, decipher some ancient Egyptian and Hebrew texts and solve a riddle that leads to the location of the Ark of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments. No ciphers in the text, but there is a cipher challenge at the end of the book.

From the novel: “The letter?—Oh! — The letter! Keep looking at me between the eyes, please. It was a string-talk letter, that we’d learned the way of it from a blind beggar in the Punjab.” I remember that there had once come to the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cypher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds; and tried to teach me his method, but failed."

Four friends (a clergyman, a retired don, a former military-intelligence officer, and a ne’er-do-well) meet at a local hostelry for a vacation of golf. One of our heros slices his drive over the trees and, while searching a railroad viaduct, finds the ball as well as a dead body. A few clues around the scene of the crime (e.g. the victim’s hat is 15 feet
from his body) and on the body lead the four to suspect foul play. A classic British mystery with four bumbling “detectives” and a solution that they should trip over, but don’t. The novel contains a book code message.


219. Langen, Henry E. *Bibliography of the Literature of Cryptography*. Unpublished manuscript, 1956. Henry E. Langen (1918 - 1962) was the editor-in-chief of The Cryptogram, the magazine of the American Cryptogram Association (ACA) from 1952 - 1956. He was later the vice-president of the ACA. His ACA nom was HELCRYPT. Langen was a life-long fan of cryptography and had an extensive personal library of cryptographic titles, both fiction and non-fiction. For several years he also contributed a regular column The Crypto-Black Chamber to The Cryptogram. During World War II he served in the Army Air Forces as an undercover CID agent. This bibliography was created by Langen during his tenure as editor of The Cryptogram and is dated December 31, 1956.There are over 850 total entries in the bibliography and more than 300 examples of crypto fiction titles in the bibliography. Not all of them are listed here for a number of reasons. Some of the entries only mention a cryptogram, but give no examples of the cryptogram, the cryptographic system, or of cryptanalysis. Some of the entries also only mention Morse code but list no other cryptographic systems, and so were not included in this web page. There are several entries listed as fiction in the bibliography that do not have any cryptograms or descriptions of cryptograms or cryptographic systems in them. These were also not included in this web page. There are also a number of errors in Langen’s list. These include errors in dates, the names or locations of publishers, the spelling of author’s names, and the spelling of words in story titles. There are also a few stories where Langen got the cryptographic system wrong or where he left out a description altogether. All of these have been corrected in this list.

220. Le Carre, John. *The Looking Glass War*. New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1965. A British Secret Service office called “The Department” sends a poorly trained Pole into East Germany to discover if the Soviets are putting nuclear missiles near the West German border. The agent makes himself known by killing an East German border guard and by his poor security techniques; notably the fact that he takes a very long time to make radio transmission reports. The chase is on as the East Germans try to close in on the agent before he can complete his mission. The novel contains a bungled Vigenere cipher as part of the plot.

Hollis. The perpetrators, a couple who run a crime syndicate, use a book cipher. The book is Samuel Johnson’s ‘Rasselas: Prince of Abissinia’. The cipher messages are transmitted in the personals column of the newspaper using some number of sixes before a period to indicate the page, sixes before a colon to indicate a line, sixes before a semi-colon to indicate a word on the line, and sixes before a comma to indicate which letter in the word. There is also a bit of steganography when one of the victims uses lemon juice to hide a declaration of innocence in an otherwise incriminatory letter.

Adventures of an English Ambassador. There are no real cryptograms in the novel, but it gives a good representation of using a code book to encipher and decipher code messages.

Contains a cipher that uses musical notes to convey the message. An innocent man gets involved with a gang of society crooks.

Our hero, Michael Berrington, is tracking down a gang of very sophisticated, very high-class thieves who rob the mansions of upper crust English gentry. There are robberies, murders, mind control, hypnosis, coded messages (using a substitution cipher) in newspapers, and even a romance. It’s got it all. The cryptograms use a progressive key substitution where the first substitution uses a standard alphabet starting at B, the next substitution uses the alphabet starting at D, the next starting at F, etc. repeating. There is also a message using a word code.

The treasures of the Kings of France are in The Hollow Needle, and Aursene Lupin must decrypt a monoalphabetic substitution cipher which leads to a puzzle to find the treasure. His only problem is a young detective racing to find the solution as well.

With war-time Lisbon serving as the background for the backstairs activities of Nazi sympathizers and collaborators the plot revolves around two murders in and out of cafe society. Argue Steele, a private detective, and Ellen, his USO girl, solve the murders and prevent a pro-fascist plot. A coded message using a roulette wheel as the key is central to the plot.

From the book jacket: “In swift succession, three men — all leading citizens of the little California coastal town of Lazy Hook — vanished without a trace. All three had been connected with the late Spencer Van Dyke, eccentric millionaire, who though he died of natural causes had managed to surround his death with many-sided mystery. What had Spencer Van Dyke done with the huge sum of cash withdrawn from his bank shortly
before his death? What was the meaning of the fantastic poem he caused to be engraved on his marble gravestone? Why had he bequeathed the vast and dilapidated Van Dyke mansion to his hermit butler? Had he come from beyond the grave to spirit away Lyman Hobbs, his undertaker, Henri Picard, his lawyer, and Peter Ramsey, the local editor? These were the questions that were thrust at the strange pair of detectives who set out to solve the apparently insoluble. The two, handicapped Julian Renard, mostly brains, and Robert Bannister, mostly brawn, found themselves in a peculiar and dangerous setup, and only their assorted but well-balanced gifts, together with a certain bit of luck, brought them through alive and entitled to the rewards they had been promised.” The novel contains a cipher message using a null cipher.

Doctor Who tries to help some aliens get home during World War II with the unlikely help of Alan Turing, Graham Greene, and Joseph Heller. There is some discussion of cryptography but no real ciphers to solve. The text is very weird and not very well written. It uses a very complicated and bizarre plot and provides not very realistic characterizations of Turing or Greene or Heller.

Safe-cracker Chester Fay is released from Dartmoor prison shortly after World War I so he can steal the key to a cipher for Scotland Yard. The cipher, which has defied the efforts of English and American cryptanalysts, contains the formulas for all the dyes used in the industrial dye industry. Getting those formulas would break the German monopoly on the industry. It turns out the cipher is a ruse and the real formulas are steganographically hidden on the pages using radium ink.

(Partly from the Chicago Tribune) The novel is an intriguing story about the theft of a valuable first edition from a college library. The scene shifts to an island off Cape Cod, where the inn is located. There’s plenty of mystery, considerable action, much quaint conversation, a romance, and some sluging, but only one death—apparently accidental. There’s also a null cipher that leads to the solution.

Uses a pigpen cipher (also called the angle cipher).

A murder mystery that uses the postage stamps on a series of letters to create a cipher message.

A mysterious man is found dead in the Preston’s home. No one knows how he got there and no one knows who he is. A suspicion of a German spy ring evolves. The novel
contains a cipher that uses a series of chess end game diagrams. The alphabet is embedded in the top half of the board and the letters are read off the white pieces in the order of their power King, Queen, etc.


Perry and his friends help pretty Jessica Kenwood and her grandfather look for his inheritance - a safe containing a treasure. The clue is a grille cipher message (pages 161 - 162). Unfortunately, there are others looking for the safe as well.


When Genevera Tressady is poisoned in her locked study the mystery begins. Hal Inderwick rushes to the side of his soon to be love, Jasmine Holland and jumps into the deep end of the mystery. A book code that uses Macbeth as its text provides the final clue to the murderer.


Langen states that this short story contains a transposition cipher. (Neither magazine nor story found. Author is believed to be Frank Ulrey Lockmiller, 1910 - ?.)


Salem Wiley is a genius cryptanalyst, courted by the world’s top security agencies ever since making a breakthrough discovery in her field of quantum computing. She’s also an agoraphobe, shackled to a narrow routine by her fear of public places. When her mother’s disappearance is linked to a plot to assassinate the country’s first viable female presidential candidate, Salem finds herself both target and detective in a modern-day witch hunt. Drawn into a labyrinth of messages encrypted by Emily Dickinson and centuries-old codes tucked inside the Beale Cipher, Salem begins to uncover the truth: an ancient and ruthless group is hell-bent on ruling the world, and only a select group of women stands in its way.


A murder in the North Country sends Scotland Yard on the hunt. The novel contains a null cipher message.


Manly man and ex Army Ranger Carver Nash finds a box while digging post holes on his ranch in rural Utah. the box contains several million dollars worth of Spanish gold and a document that purports to be a clue to the location of the lost Rhoades Gold Mine - a mine said to contain billions in gold and gold artifacts. Of course somebody else is after the gold, and of course there’s a smart (but vulnerable) female mathematician who can also solve ciphers. Each clue contains a cipher that must be solved before the location of
the next clue can be revealed. There are five ciphers in all - two Vigenere ciphers, a transposition cipher, and two Bacon biliteral ciphers. ALL the ciphers are incorrectly encrypted so that the keywords for each will not correctly decrypt the ciphertext. Most of the cryptanalysis in the novel consists of AHA! moments when somebody miraculously guesses a keyword. The examples in the Appendix are also mostly wrong.

Simeon Jannaway leads a double life. At night he is the poor silversmith, depending on his daughter Marion’s income. During the day he is Simeon Hoadley, a receiver of stolen goods and a very rich miser. When Simeon is murdered by a man he had sent to prison on false charges, Marion discovers his double life and a cipher that will lead to the fortune that Simeon has hidden. The cipher is a simple monoalphabetic substitution that uses a Hammond typewriter to perform the substitutions. The Hammond (first manufactured in 1884) was unique in having two shift keys, one for capital letters and one for numerals and punctuation. It is the second shift key that is used for the substitutions.

A novel that is based on the newspaper comic strip created by retired Lieutenant Commander Frank V. Martinek. Navy officer Don Winslow battles a foreign sabotage ring led by a mysterious figure calling himself “The Scorpion”, who barks his orders to his agents through a giant TV screen in their underwater hideout. As The Scorpion unfolds plan after plan to stop the Navy from constructing a new base Winslow finds himself a hair away from certain death at the end of each chapter. The novel contains a railfence cipher message.

http://books.google.com/books?id=pNgIAQAAIAAJ
A number of gypsy signs are used as a cipher message.

Captain Hugh North is sent to Hawaii to try to catch a Russian spy. Instead he stumbles headlong into political intrigue between the Japanese and the United States (it is 1932) and spies everywhere. A dead woman floating near a dock with a suspicious tattoo and a lovely Russian who might just be the spy he’s looking for complicate the search. The novel contains a Playfair cipher.

Captain Hugh North looks for spies in Budapest. Secret ink messages are involved in the plot.

Captain Hugh North of G-2 Army Intelligence is called to Cairo to help a British agent,
Major Bruce Kilgour, on a case involving a series of murders in Cairo. The killer leaves a red-and-black women’s garter on the left arm of each victim. The murders are somehow linked a group supplying weapons to Arab nationalists. Solution of the crimes is aided by the ability of North and his allies to decode messages, including a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher. Another message is written in hieroglyphics.

Captain Hugh North of Army intelligence is posted to the Philippines. While at a dinner party in the commanding officer’s house a story about a treasure is told and in impromptu treasure hunt is organized. While on the hunt one man is stabbed to death and another is missing. North figures that the treasure is a clue to the murder and so begins to search for both treasure and the murderer. His only clues are a couple of rosaries with the wrong number of beads. The story includes a Mirabeau cipher. A Mirabeau is a monoalphabetic substitution cipher that arranges the keyed letters of the alphabet in five groups of five letters each. Each group is also numbered, so that the cipher text for each letter is a two number sequence (group, index of letter within group).

Captain Hugh North (G-2) is sent to Hong Kong to prevent foreign agents (in 1937 they’re all Japanese and German) from stealing a secret airplane fuel formula developed by Trans-Pacific Airways. Of course there’s a murder (or two) and several clues including some messages that use secret ink.

Set in Brazil after the fall of France, but before Pearl Harbor, this Hugh North adventure takes the G-2 Major from Sao Paulo to Rio de Janeiro investigating Nazi sympathizers in an American company. When the president of the company is murdered at a party filled with Axis sympathizers, North is hot on the trail, trying to find the murderer and to stop a ship loaded with supplies for the Nazis. North solves a crossword puzzle cipher message as part of the novel.

Captain (and later Major) Hugh North is sent to Singapore at the very beginning of WW2 to find a man who has developed a new formula for a lightweight but strong alloy that could be vital to the U.S. war effort. Messages hidden with secret ink give clues. The feeling in Singapore is given by the following quote: “Portents of increasing tension hung still heavier in the air. Police in silent and watchful squads of four stalked along streets eddying with a restless, polyglot crowd. On the horizon in the direction of Tanglin and the Naval Base, searchlights played, raking the hot, starry sky with tenuous, silver fingers. Newsboys, hoarse with excitement, rushed about waving extras printed in English, Chinese, Malay and Sanskrit. Before glaring clusters of naked electric bulbs illuminating native shops, dark-faced men argued and gesticulated. Lights glowed, too, in the official offices in the Fullerton building, and quantities of chit coolies ran errands as if the devil were after them. A lively disquiet filled North. What the devil could be going on at the other end of the cables and the radio stations? Of only one thing was he sure: The breath of war beat hot on Singapore.”
250. ———. *The Washington Legation Murders*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1935. Captain Hugh North and his British intelligence buddy scours Washington for a spy known as the “Guardsman” who is stealing military secrets and blueprints for weaponry in the era just after Hitler comes to power and Japan invades China. Several messages using secret inks are used.


253. ———. *Panic*. New York: William Morrow, 1944. Alison Tracey figures out the key to a mixed-alphabet Vigenere cipher and helps solve her uncle’s murder and uncovers a traitor during WWII. The novel contains good descriptions of polyalphabetic substitution ciphers and the Bazeries and Kasiski methods of cryptanalysis.


255. ———. *The Goblin Market*. New York: William Morrow, 1943. When an American wire service reporter is murdered on the island of Santa Teresa off the coast of Brazil during WW2, our hero must solve the murder. Down-on-his-luck former journalist Philip Stark is hired by the wire service to find the murderer. Nazi activity, submarines attacking transport ships, and secret codes (using a journalistic shorthand code in telegram messages, “cablese”) provide one problem after another that must be solved before the murderer is revealed.

256. ———. *The Imposter*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1977. Marina Skinner wakes up from a car accident in a sanatorium confronted by a man claiming to be her husband. But he’s an imposter! Lots of crypto stuff in the book. Starting with a 19 line cipher (we only see the last 4 lines). The cryptogram is a superencipherment - a two-step cipher that uses a Vigenere cipher to encipher an already enciphered message. The first encipherment uses a running key polyalphabetic. The cipher is cleverer because the message is a formula involving laser technology and using practically nothing but abbreviations. Great crypto discussion with references to David Kahn, The Codebreakers, and Parker Hitt’s 1916 Military Cryptanalysis manual.


Bulldog Drummond is relaxing in his Scottish retreat when a rock with a coded message attached smashes his window. The rock was thrown by an inventor who is being kidnapped for the secret to his new airplane design.


261. Melchior, Ib. *The Tombstone Cipher*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1983. Scott Sanders and Janie Flynn, two Hollywood screenwriters, are propelled into a hell of neo-Nazi plots and murders as they try to decipher the quatrain etched on Shakespeare’s tombstone and find a supposedly priceless treasure. The plot is weak and the cryptology weaker. Bacon’s bi-literal cipher is mentioned. The cipher in the book is a combination of steganography - the message is hidden in the quatrain - and an unlikely monoalphabetic substitution cipher. The cipher depends heavily on guessing the locations of nulls and even more guessing of how words are spelled in seventeenth century England. The author also mis-identifies Col. George Fabyan as a “U.S. Army cryptographer.” The book contains an appendix in which the author describes his cryptanalysis of the real cipher.


263. Meno, Joe. *The Boy Detective Fails*. Chicago, IL: Punk Planet Books, 2006. After his younger sister Caroline commits suicide, Billy Argo, the boy detective spends ten years in St. Vitus Hospital for the Mentally Ill because his parents are afraid he’ll also come unhinged. Once he’s out, the boy detective tries to come to terms with Caroline’s suicide and get life back together. The book contains a cardboard cipher disk that allows you to solve the three Caesar ciphers in the text. No cryptanalysis because each cipher comes with the key.


Featuring his famous detective Martin Hewitt, this collection of Morrison’s short stories contains two that have references to codes and ciphers in them. In “The Adventure of the Channel Marsh”, Hewitt solves a transposition cipher that uses a knight’s tour as the route through the cryptograms table. While there are no cryptograms in “The Case of The Admiralty Code” the entire story revolves around the theft (and recovery) of the British Admiralty’s code book.


Naval Lieutenant Roberto Rovere is sent to Rome in 1943 to secretly photograph a German Enigma machine and Wehrmacht code book. Unbeknownst to Rovere his mission is a setup by the Americans to convince the Germans the secret of the Enigma is still intact. No ciphers are used in the book, but a reasonable explanation of the workings of the Enigma is given. The author erroneously describes Ultra as a machine.


Meg Parrish, cryptographer for the NSA steals a set of cryptograms (called codes) while an undercover agent. The cryptograms turn out to be partial DNA sequences of telepaths the government is hunting. Not decipherable because there is no way to distinguish between possible plaintexts - the author of the cipher is dead and took the key with him. There isn’t much cryptology in the book. The novel does contain short discussions of password cracking and the Clipper Chip.


Search for a magical chess set leads to many puzzles and spans centuries.


A mutilated corpse in a Maginot Line ammunition room leads our here to Brittany and an archeological expedition on the Breton coast. Enlisting the aid of an English actor-spy, and with Papa Pontivy using his instincts to the limit, they ferret out ciphers, identities, and organization and solve the murder and catch (sort of) the murderer. All the ciphers in the book are simple substitution ciphers.


The mystery starts with the arrival of coded messages and some unwelcome gifts. The Casecrackers, young amateur detectives from New England, use logical deductions and powers of observation to get to the resolution of their cases. The cipher used is a simple direct standard monoalphabetic substitution.

A World War I German spy, en route from Argentina to Portugal discovers too late that the coded message he received just before sailing warned him not to sail. His choices boil down to either giving himself up and saving the ship or waiting for the inevitable torpedo.


275. Oechsle, Michael. *The Lost Cipher*. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 2016. Lucas’s father has recently died in Afghanistan, and to help him cope, his grandmother sends him to Camp Kawani, a camp for kids who have lost a parent. While there, he hears about the local legend of Thomas Jefferson Beale. Beale supposedly hid a hoard of gold in the mountains 200 years before. The location is encrypted in a set of codes no one has ever been able to decipher. When Lucas and his newfound friends decide to track down the treasure, they embark on a mission that could be too dangerous to survive.


278. O’Keefe, Bernard J. *Trapdoor*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988. So the US is using the RSA algorithm to protect its nuclear launch codes and a clever software developer changes the public-private key pair, rendering the US nuclear arsenal useless. Alas, the description of the RSA algorithm on page 107 is “almost” correct. In describing the algorithm, June Malik (the good software designer in the novel) says, “The beauty of this technique is that to calculate the private key you would have to factor one of the original primes, ...” Really she means you have to factor the composite product of the two original primes to recover them. (really all you need to do is factor the totient function).


victims lead to three MIT students who played blackjack to make spending money. One of them, a mathematician, develops an algorithm to factor composite numbers, breaking the RSA algorithm in the process.

Poor Miss Page is hired as a seamstress for a rich woman and gets involved in smuggling and other nefarious doings. A steganographic word code is used in the novel. For example, one message reads: “Your letter received. Send me ten of the thousand circulars quoting sheep prices for March. Home market good this week for forty or fifty and even more points rise if my brokers handled the situation properly.” Reading every third word reveals the hidden message.

Intrigue on a Mediterranean steamship. The plot involves a girl embroiled in a shipboard mystery. She has at least two gangs after her and possibly the police, as her father may, or may not, have been a master criminal. She doesn’t know whom to trust. There is, of course, a mysterious and sinister deck of cards involved. A keyphrase monoalphabetic substitution cipher is used.

Calvin Norwood, a high society financier is hosting a dinner party. Mr. Norwood has a private museum of crime artifacts that fascinates his dinner guests, especially, scientific detective Wade Terhune and retired NYC detective Timothy McCarty. A good time is had by all until someone discovers Norwood’s neighbor Evelyn Jarvis dead under one of the displays. Terhune’s science and deduction is pitted against McCarty’s dogged procedural plodding to find the murderer. McCarty comes through albeit using some of Terhune’s own techniques. McCarty finds an accusatory message on a seemingly blank sheet of paper. (Not secret ink, but an accidental steganographic message composed on a typewriter with no ribbon.)

Plot unknown. Juvenile fiction involving pirates and cipher messages.

Billy Kane, confidential secretary to multi-millionaire David Ellsworth is framed for murder. Billy runs and must find the real murderer before he’s caught. Luckily for Billy he is the spitting image of a small-time crook - the Rat - and so descends into New York’s underworld to save himself and find the murderer. A simple substitution cipher is used for a couple of messages in the novel. Each word is reversed and then shifted just one place in the standard alphabet.

Enid thinks that The Big Shot - a gangster in 1920s New York - may be her long lost
brot her Roy. Turns out she’s wrong and pretty much the entire gang gets it in the end. There’s a cipher message of unknown type that the Big Shot receives over the phone. He deciphers the message and heads out. Enid, using a pencil, reads the impressions of his decipherment from the next page on the pad. It’s a message with information on cracking a rich man’s safe that night.


Rhoda Gray, aka “The White Moll”, is trying to help the down-trodden in NY city in the early 20th century. “Code” is a simple cipher were each letter in the message is the sum of three single digits (e.g. 739 = 7+3+9 = 19 = S).


Harry Maul, aka “The Hawk” has just gotten out of Sing Sing prison and he takes up his larcenous ways again. This time the Hawk is trailing a gang of railway thieves, staying one step ahead of them and stealing their loot before they can get at it. The Hawk can stay ahead of the crooks because he’s figured out the key to their cipher system. They’re using a transposition cipher with nulls added to the cipher text and transmitting their messages over the railway line’s telegraph wires. The Hawk decrypts several cryptograms during the course of the novel. There is a nice twist at the end.


Bob Kingsley must solve a substitution cipher (the message is hidden in one of the two idols, the key in the second) where a single cipher letter represents multiple plaintext letters. The message helps solve his uncle’s murder and leads to a South Sea’s pirate’s treasure.


Jed, Liza, and Bill are visiting their grandparents for the summer. Their grandfather tells them the story of a hidden treasure of Indian artifacts, the only clue being a sketch of three objects and a question mark. Each of the objects reveals a clue that will lead them closer to the treasure. The children accidentally find the first clue and the chase is on! The novel contains three puzzles, the first is a simple monoalphabetic substitution that uses the numbers of the letters of the alphabet as the cipher alphabet. The second is a fill-in-the-blank guessing game that creates a transposition cipher. The third is a crossword puzzle whose answers lead to the treasure.


Anne Douglass, long residing behind the Iron Curtain is dispatched from Moscow to contact a scientist with a dangerous chemical formula. John Pickering, attorney and government agent falls for Anne, but doesn’t trust her. Invisible ink messages on the backs of a pack of playing cards provide a clue.


American spy, Peter Morrow, is dispatched to Paris to break up a Soviet plot to run
terrorist trains from Hungary into France. On the way he meets and falls for Kitty Blake, whose parents are being held by the Soviets in Bucharest. Morrow saves the parents, and catches the evil Soviet agents in a thrilling chase through a train. A transposition cipher is used in the novel.

294. Pears, Iain. *An Instance of the Fingerpost*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998. The story revolves around the solution of the murder of Dr. Robert Grove in Oxford, England in 1663. Four different characters give their version of events: Marco da Cola, a visiting Italian physician and spy; Jack Prestcott, the son of a traitor who fled the country to avoid execution; Dr. John Wallis, a mathematician and cryptographer; and Anthony Wood, a mild-mannered Oxford antiquarian. Wallis solves several ciphers including a polyalphabetic that uses the first letters of a phrase from a book to change the cipher alphabets every word of the message.

295. Penny, Louise. *The Brutal Telling*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2009. The ciphers are carved into two larger carvings. The message is short - only 14 characters MRKBVYDDO OWSVI. The description of a Caesar cipher is accurate but then there’s the sentence “The brilliance of the Caesar’s shift is that it’s almost impossible to break because the shift can be whatever length you want.” Well, not really. All you have to do is try the 25 possible keys. And that leads to a shift of 11 (in the book the author says the shift is 16. The author mis-interprets the word shift. When she says “a shift of 16” she means that the A is shifted down 16 letters in the plain alphabet so the ciphertext A is underneath the 17th letter of the plain alphabet Q. Starting from there, the cipher letter K maps to the plain alphabet letter A. This is normally described as a shift of 11. The two ciphertex above decrypt to CHARLOTTE and EMILY. Leading to the murderer.

296. Penny, Rupert. *Policeman’s Evidence*. Shreveport, LA: Ramble House, 1938. Anthony Purdon is invited to the run-down country estate of Major Francis Adair for the New Year and to help the Major find a treasure supposedly hidden on the grounds. Naturally, in the course of time, the Major is found an apparent suicide with a bullet through the head in his locked study. Purdon and his friend Chief Inspector Edward Beale slog through the not so very nice house guests on the way to a solution to the locked-room mystery. The cipher is a couple of seventeenth century shorthand messages that must be deciphered to reveal a puzzle message that ultimately leads to the (disappointingly small) treasure.

297. Perkins, Wilder. *Hoare and the Portsmouth Atrocities*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998. Captain Bartholemew Hoare saves a woman from muggers and gets himself involved in theft, ciphered messages, and murder. The cipher is never decrypted and is described as a “permutation cipher” but really appears to be a book cipher that uses a French Bible as the source of the key.

British Middle East officials in the aftermath of World War I. The key to the plot is a cryptogram in what Ramses (Amelia’s son) determines to be a book code. Amelia identifies the book as a torrid romance novel of the time “Desert Passion” and deciphers the message - of course.


Conan Doyle and his mentor Dr. Bell must solve the mystery of a beautiful patient with hallucinations about her parent’s murders. Bell solves a mixed alphabet monoalphabetic substitution cipher that uses Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein as the key. He also discusses the Beale cipher and Poe’s The Gold Bug.

The best and first of the classic cipher stories. Poe uses punctuation symbols as cipher letters in his message. The message is really a puzzle within a monoalphabetic substitution cipher as William Legrand solves the cipher message and unravels the resulting puzzle to find a pirate treasure. The highlight of the story is Poe’s detailed description of how to cryptanalyze a monoalphabetic substitution cipher.

Chapter II - “Instructions from M.I.” and Chapter III - “The Cryptograph Machine.”

http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2861/2861-h/2861-h.htm#2H_4_0012
Douglas Hargrave gets mixed up in a transaction involving perfect sapphires and counterfeit bullion. The cryptogram in the story is one that uses the second paragraph of a message as the key to decrypting the message hidden in the first paragraph. Story originally published in the 23 Dec 1916 issue of the Saturday Evening Post.

Monsieur Jonquelle explains how the explorer Chauvannes wove a puzzle into his journal to disguise the hiding place of priceless emeralds. Once one discovers the real identity of Chauvannes’ mysterious invisible visitors, the diary takes on an entirely different viewpoint. The story is very well written and keeps its mystery right up till the very end. There is, however, no cryptanalysis in the story and the secret message is the journal
itself.


307. Preston, Douglas, and Lincoln Child. Riptide. New York: Warner Books, 1998. A seventeenth-century architect’s encrypted journal provides the key to a $2 billion-dollar pirate treasure. The journal is believed to contain the design - and the location of the booby-traps - of the Water Pit where the treasure is hidden. The encrypted journal entries are hidden using invisible ink. The entries are then broken up into two parts. The first part encrypted using a nomenclator, and the second using a polyalphabetic cipher with between five and 15 cipher alphabets. The story is a take-off on the real mystery of Oak Island, Nova Scotia, Canada.


309. Propper, Milton. The Family Burial Murders. New York: Harper and Sons, 1934. Tommy Rankin, homicide investigator for the Philadelphia police, is called in on a strange case. An elderly dowager has died a peaceful and natural death and is being buried. Unfortunately, one of her nephew’s also ends up in the coffin, having died most unnaturally. A cipher that uses a telephone keypad to create messages is described and used in the novel.


311. ———. The Four of Hearts. New York: Fred Stokes Company, 1938. Ellery Queen is having a go at Hollywood. He’s working for studio head Jacques Butcher on a biopic about two stars John Royle and Blythe Stuart, whose on-again-off-again romance and long simmering feud are Hollywood legend. When John and Blythe decide to (re)marry and are then murdered in their honeymoon plane (poison; nobody else in the
plane), Queen steps in to investigate. It turns out that Blythe had been receiving a series of bizarre letters, each containing a playing card. And now her daughter Bonnie is also receiving letters and cards. Queen has to figure out the cryptic message hidden in the cards to solve the murders. The playing cards form a coded message that Queen solves in the end.

A slightly dodgy computer consultant is enmeshed in a hackers plot to milk the world’s electronic funds transfer process. Many discussions of public-key cryptography, key management, digital signatures, and the DES, but not much cryptanalysis.

After new law school graduate Harry Garnet and anthro major and geek Anne Ames are nearly blown up in an explosion that kills Anne’s mathematician father, they set out on the trail of the bomber. The plot hinges on the proposed adoption by the U.S. government of a new encryption algorithm that requires an escrowed key system. No real cryptograms in this novel. Several descriptions of escrowed systems, some discussion of modern computer encryption schemes, and discussions of email vulnerabilities and MOOs.

Matthew Rutherford sets out to find a cache of Confederate government gold stolen by his great-great-great grandfather. Using tips from his ancestor’s diary, he and his beautiful sidekick solve two cryptograms that lead them to the treasure. The first cipher is a transposition with many nulls. Once the transposition is solved, the cipher is cut and pasted into a skytale that gives the key to the second cipher. The second cipher is a standard Vigenere with a long key (from the Confederate constitution). A good read with some interesting and plausible discussions of the ciphers and their cryptanalysis.

Who killed Marshall Maddox? That is the question Craig Kennedy must answer. The mystery revolves around the death of the American munitions manufacturer. Was it a crime of passion? Paquita, the adventuress is interested in the Maddox brothers. Was it to steal the secrets of the new weapon, the teleautomaton? It appears that only Criag Kennedy and his scientific detection can figure this one out. A checkerboard cipher (like a Polybius square) is used in the novel.

Craig Kennedy is on the hunt for Soviet spies who are poisoning some Russian refugees in New York. A checkerboard cipher (a simple substitution similar to a Polybius square) is used to communicate between the spies and Kennedy easily decrypts an intercepted message.
Craig Kennedy is drawn into a mysterious murder. The victim is seemingly paralyzed but is able to write a mysterious message before he expires. A digraphic cipher is used with a two letter key (one letter to start the first letter of the plaintext alphabet across the columns, and one to start the plaintext letters down the rows of the 27 x 27 grid that contains the ciphertext pairs.

Scientist and detective Craig Kennedy solves several cases in this collection of short stories. Several of the stories use cryptology as part of the plot line. In “The Poisoned Pen” steganography is used. “The Germ of Death” uses a type of grille that conceals a Polybius square cipher. Two other stories, “The Yeggman” and “The Unofficial Spy” make use of ciphers but never identify them.

Craig Kennedy saves the reputation (and life) of his client by discovering a set of messages written in secret ink that exonerates him from murder. The messages (steganography here) were written on the backs of other, damning messages.

A collection of Craig Kennedy short stories, several of which contain cryptograms, including The Mystic Poisoner, which contains a substitution cipher.

John Creevey gets involved with two groups of public school boys swapping cryptograms while trying to recover from his wife abandoning him and his sister’s death. The ciphers are monoalphabetic substitutions that use quotations from books as the key to the cipher messages.

Crossword puzzle expert Giles Sullivan and his friend Isabel Macintosh are called to Washington to solve a series of cipher messages hidden in a daily crossword puzzle. The cipher is a route cipher variant used by a Russian spy ring to pass messages about a disarmament conference. The cipher messages are squares or rectangles that start at the crossword clue corresponding to the day of the month (start at square 29 on the 29th of the month). All the crossword puzzles are fifteen by fifteen puzzles and each message is twenty-eight characters long. The letters in the messages are also swapped by pairs. Most vowels are removed and nearly all the words are abbreviated.

Crossword puzzle expert Giles Sullivan and his friend Isabel Macintosh are involved in a crossword puzzle game that decides who among six relatives gets an eighteen million dollar inheritance. The crossword puzzles produce transposition ciphers that lead to the
whereabouts of the legacy.


325. Rhode, John. *Hendon’s First Case*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company Publishers, 1935. Jimmy Waghorn, an indifferent Cambridge student, enrolls in the new Hendon Police College and is given a chance to solve a break-in. The break-in turns into a murder and Jimmie is up to his eyeballs in problems. Dr. Priestly comes in at the end, and gives a good discourse on solving ciphers. Jimmy proceeds to solve the cipher message and solve the crimes. The cipher uses the signature at the bottom of the message as a key for a homophonic, polygraphic cipher. The signature is 25 letters long, forming a 13 x 12 rectangle where the letters of the alphabet are continuously written one per cell, starting with “a” to fill in the table. A plaintext letter is mapped to two ciphertext letters. Because multiple copies of the alphabet are used to fill the table, there are either six or seven plaintext letters in the table and any of the row/column headers may be the ciphertext for a particular plaintext letter. For example, a plaintext “e” can be encrypted as any of AT, NN, RH, EE, BF, GA, or NL.

326. ———. *Peril at Cranbury Hall*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1930. Bad apple Oliver Gilroy gets out of prison and tries to blackmail some of his former associates and his former fiancee. The story takes several turns as his former partners try unsuccessfully to kill Oliver. Gilroy is lured to a rendezvous with a former partner by a message using a Playfair cipher. Several cipher messages are used in the novel and Dr. Priestley, a private investigator, gives a good discussion of the cryptanalysis of a Playfair using a known-plaintext attack (Priestley has possession of part of the grid and one word of the cipher).

327. Rice, Robert. *The Nature of Midnight*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2003. Postal inspectors Max Dombroski and Gillian Loomis are thrust into a series of murders revolving around some lost letters mailed in 1918 and related to the sinking of the Lusitania. One of the letters is in a British field cipher “MV Series I” with a key of 4-1-5-1-3. One adds those numbers successively to letters of the message to encipher and subtract them to decipher. (see pages 268-269.)


The Secret Agent’s Club, Winnie, Alex, John, Holly and Panic have lost their secret code book! A series of clues written as coded messages lead them to their book. The messages include one written in invisible ink (milk), a simple substitution cipher, and a mirror cipher.

When Willie, confined to a wheelchair, receives coded messages signed “G.O.D.” on his computer, he needs the help of the other Shoebox Kids to identify the writer and find Willie’s missing dog. One of a series of books for elementary school children with a Christian theme and message. The ciphers are simple substitution ciphers.

Fu Manchu is out there being bad again. Novel contains a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher.

An excerpt from The Hand of Fu Manchu in which sleuth Nayland Smith solves two cipher messages while on the hunt for the elusive doctor. The ciphers are a monoalphabetic substitution using punctuation marks to substitute for letters. The punctuation marks can each substitute for more than one letter by using italicized letters (which act like a shift key) immediately preceding them.

Eleanor Roosevelt solves the murder of a Japanese spy in the map room of the White House. Brief mention of a cryptogram the dead man had on him. The cryptograms are in a Japanese code and are described by a member of the Army cipher bureau.

During World War II, in Rockport Illinois (a thinly disguised Rock Island, IL), amateur sleuth Jane Amanda Edwards leaps into the mystery surrounding an attempted sabotage and the subsequent murder of the owner of the local defense plant. It’s important that she solve the murder because her brother Arthur is one of the suspects! Jane finds a cipher message in a porcelain dog and must decipher it to uncover the saboteurs. The cipher is a monoalphabetic substitution cipher that uses the manufacturer’s information on the bottom of the dog as the keyword and uses numbers to represent the vowels and fill out the alphabet.

A real bodice-ripper. No, really, there’s a scene with bodice-ripping. It’s 1802. Lady Juliet Pervill has had her reputation ruined, so clearly the only thing she can do is volunteer with the Foreign Office’s nascent crypto office. Naturally, the chief cryptographer is the hunky Seamus McCurren who sees no use for Lady Juliet (well,
there’s one use). Lady Juliet, while she can’t go to Oxford, apparently sat in on some math classes, so she’s qualified. No real crypto here and no descriptions of cryptanalysis.

336. Sayers, Dorothy. *Have His Carcase: A Lord Peter Wimsey Mystery*. New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam, 1932. When Harriet Vane discovers the dead body of a man on a beach she finds that it is impossible to escape from the mystery, or from the attentions of Lord Peter Wimsey. The mystery surrounding the death of the hotel gigolo Paul Alexis is that it appears to have been suicide. The excellent discussion and solution of a Playfair cipher plays a pivotal role in the solution of the mystery.


339. ———. *The Nine Tailors*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962. Lord Peter Wimsey tracks down a murderer and recovers a stolen necklace in this classic detective novel. The clue to the location of the necklace lies in a seemingly random message found in the belltower of the church at Fenchurch St. Pauls. The message is a cipher that uses the order of ringing of the eight church bells in a particular song to pick letters out of the message. The cipher is made into a rectangle 8 columns wide (there are 8 bells), written out in row-major order; the key tells you which letter in each row to use.


An historical mystery novel set in Haiti. The story shifts between modern-day Haiti and the adventures of two American families and the turbulent time in the 1820s as Haiti fought for its independence from France. The novel contains a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher.


Doris, Sally, and little Genevieve are exploring around Slipper Point when they discover a cave. Inside the cave they find an old tin box and in the box is a scrap of paper with a peculiar alphabet table written on it. Further in the cave is what appears to be an old cedar door that conceals a tunnel that leads to Miss Camilla’s basement! An old mysterious message found in a notebook combined with the cipher key from the tin box yields the solution to a fifty year old mystery! The cipher is a Polybius square with a key sequence.


A mystery based on a navigator’s octant. Contains a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher message.


The setting is a Georgia town. An architect with a mysterious past loses his suitcase containing his latest building plans that he hopes will revitalize his career. On top of this, his home is burglarized. A group of local kids takes on the job of solving the mystery. But eventually, it is the children who solve the puzzle. There is a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher in the novel.


The novel contains a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher message. No other plot details are available.


Professor Henry Fielding and his friend, the inquisitive Mr. Sheridan Orford find themselves mixed up in murder. Mr. Orford is mistakenly given a letter to be delivered and when the (it turns out erroneous) recipient dies right in front of him, he leaps in to investigate the death. It turns out the letter contained a pointer to the key to a book cipher that uses the Bible as it’s text. Two letters are sent for each cipher message, one with the cryptogram in it and one with a Biblical book, chapter and verse that indicates where to start the key. From there the cipher simply converts letters to numbers and adds (or subtracts if one is deciphering) to get the ciphertext/plaintext.


Mr. Blessington, a staid and settled Englishman, is sent on a financial mission to the
English sector of post World War II Germany. He is accidentally involved in a spy ring, gold smuggling and chasing a secret, evil Nazi underground. Blessington chases clues all around war-torn Germany, including a mysterious message written in a null cipher. At the end Dr. Bruderstein is found alive and the gold is recovered almost intact.

Prince Zaleski is forced to leave his stately (if dark) estate to try to solve a mysterious series of apparent suicides all across Europe. They start with the death of an elderly wealthy man of science, Professor Dr. Schleschinger. Next to Schleschinger’s body is a piece of papyrus with a message written in mysterious symbols (hence a symbol cipher - monoalphabetic substitution; the cipher is like a rebus and decrypts to a Latin sentence). As Zaleski’s investigations continue, more suicides crop up in Germany, France, and Britain, all of whom have the same cryptic message beside them. A very philosophical mystery story, the end of the story leads Zaleski to ruminate on the fate of society and of humanity itself.

Renaissance scholar and private investigator Kate Morgan solves a number of messages from a sixteenth century book of intelligence reports in cipher which has caused more than one murder. She discovers a message written in invisible ink, decrypts a message using a Cardano grille, and solves a Vigenere polyalphabetic cipher message.

Juvenile fiction. Sam and Dave and their friend Rita O’Toole must decipher a hidden message to figure out who stole the class trip money. The message is embedded in a seemingly random sequence of words; the first letter of every word turns into the real message.


Clay Jannon takes a job in a somewhat seedy used bookstore, only to discover that it’s a front for a 500-year-old secret society whose objective is to decrypt the codex vitae of its founder, the 15th century printer Aldus Manutius.

Alexis Tappendorf is spending the summer with her great aunt in Bedford, VA. Her new BFF Olivia Boyd and Alexis have to crack the Beale Ciphers so they can beat the evil Woodmore family to the treasure. Alexis finds the book that allows the girls to decrypt Beale Cipher #1 and #3.
357. Smith, Conrad S. “Steffi Duna, I Love You!” In *Ellery Queen’s Eye Witnesses*, edited by Ellery Queen, Hardcover:17. New York: The Dial Press, 1982. A group of movie buffs solves a message from a friend being held captive. The story provides an example of a message embedded in the answer to a puzzle; the movie buffs first answer the questions in a trivia game, then take the first letter of each answer as the hidden message. The solution leads to the liberation of their friend and the arrest of the kidnappers.

358. Smith, Justin R. *The Mills of God*. Holliston, MA: Silver Leaf Books, LLC, 2006. Constance Fairchild is the only heir to a vast business empire; unfortunately, she’s only 16 and an orphan. Her guardian ships her off to boarding school in Switzerland and all the people close to Constance begin to die mysteriously. Fortunately for Constance, she’s a genius, and has some very powerful friends. Some discussion of crypto but no real cryptograms to solve.


360. Smithline, Lawrence M. “A Cipher to Thomas Jefferson.” *American Scientist* 97, no. 2 (April 2009): 142–49. Describes the cryptanalysis of a cipher devised by UPenn mathematician Robert Patterson in 1801 and sent to Thomas Jefferson as an attachment to a letter. Jefferson at that time was the President of the American Philosophical Society and Patterson was an author. The cipher remained undecrypted until 2007 when IDA mathematician Smithline recovered the key. The cipher (1) writes a plaintext message in columns, (2) divides the rows into between 1 and 9 sections, (3) randomly orders the rows in each section (each section is ordered in the same random sequence), (4) adds a random number of letters (between 0 and 9) to the front of each row, and (4) adjusts the rows so they are left justified. The key is a two digit number where the first digits give the order of the arrangements of the rows in each section, and the second digit gives the number of letters added to the beginning of that row.


to London in disguise to unravel the disappearance of her missing mother. She also solves the disappearance of a young Marquess along the way. There are three cipher messages in the novel - all railfence ciphers with the message written backwards and then enciphered. The ciphers are left to Enola by her mother as a message on her whereabouts.

363. Stanley, George E. *The Codebreaker Kids*. New York: Avon Books, 1987. Three friends form a codebreaking service and meet a motley cast of characters including a Bulgarian spy, a man from the State Department, and a little old lady who wants her diary enciphered. The kids use transposition, monoalphabetic, and polyalphabetic ciphers, including a Gronsfeld to do their work.

364. ———. *The Codebreaker Kids Return*. New York: Avon Books, 1988. The kids are back, but this time they are in the heart of Texas working for The First Lady and the crazy University of Texas cheerleaders. The kids create simple substitution ciphers for the football coach (plays) and the cheerleaders (cheers).


366. Sterling, Stewart. *Dead Sure*. New York: E. P. Dutton Company, 1949. Fancy hotel detective, Gil Vane handles a case where a candy tycoon is murdered just as he is about to recognize a long-lost daughter. His second wife and son stand to inherit. Gil has to find the murderer. Codes and ciphers are mentioned and described but there are no messages to decrypt in the novel.


368. Stoker, Bram. *Mystery of the Sea*. New York, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1902. When Archibald Hunter comes to Cruden Bay, Aberdeenshire, for his annual holiday, he looks forward to a tranquil few days by the sea. But his holiday is disturbed by a beautiful woman, a tragedy, and a murder. What is the significance of the pages of cipher which once belonged to Don de Escoban? The cipher used is a Bacon biliteral cipher. Appendices to the novel contain an explanation of the Bacon biliteral cipher and of the solution process used. The main purpose of the novel seems to be not the plot, but the exposition of the cipher system and the solution of the cipher messages.

There is a mystery surrounding the otherwise lovely Maryland horse country estate called the “Hildebrand Hundred”. For the last 60 years or so, the owners keep dying - all within a day of the summer solstice, and all while in the gorgeous library of the estate. Hugh Hildebrand gets involved in the mystery while attending the funeral of his cousin, the latest master of the ‘Hundred’ to meet his maker. There is a long Vigenere cipher message that is key to unravelling the mystery and a very good description of how to encrypt and decrypt Vigenere cipher messages. Chapter XIII “Le Chifre Indechiffurable” gives a concise treatment of ciphers and the Vigenere table. Chapter XXI explains how to decipher a Vigenere.

The adventures of Esper Indiman and his companion Winston Thorp in early twentieth-century Manhattan. One of the escapades involves the solution of a skytale cipher that leads to a missing woman and her fortune.

Summer, 1643 England is at war with itself. King Charles I has fled London, his negotiations with Parliament in tatters. The country is consumed by bloodshed. For Thomas Hill, a man of letters quietly running a bookshop in the rural town of Romsey, knowledge of the war is limited to the rumours that reach the local inn. When a stranger knocks on his door one night and informs him that the king’s cryptographer has died, everything changes. Aware of Thomas’s background as a mathematician and his expertise in codes and ciphers, the king has summoned him to his court in Oxford. On arrival, Thomas soon discovers that nothing at court is straightforward. There is evidence of a traitor in their midst. Brutal murder follows brutal murder. And when a vital message encrypted with a notoriously unbreakable code is intercepted, he must decipher it to reveal the king’s betrayer and prevent the violent death that failure will surely bring. The ciphers of note are two Vigenere ciphers. Thomas does a good job of explaining how he discovers the keys.

The novel traces the life of Henry Esmond, Viscount of Castlewood, from his childhood through his military career and service during the War of the Spanish Succession. In 1714, Colonel Henry Esmond becomes involved in a plot to ensure the succession of James the Third as King of England. There is a brief mention of cipher messages early in the novel (while Henry’s uncle is supporting King James II during the Glorious Revolution of 1688). The other cipher message in the book uses a Cardano grille to hide a message in a letter from Henry’s cousin Frank to his mother detailing the arrival of the Pretender James in England. Neither the cipher system nor the key are described in the novel.
A hunt for spies that are listening in on wireless traffic and sending code messages to their handlers. The Boy’s Reserve during World War I comes to the rescue. The novel contains a word code with null words in it.

Alice Butler is creative, but lost and confused. She’s anti-corporate and works for one of the world’s largest toy companies. She hates modern style but people are always telling her she’s at the forefront of pop culture. She’s a loner but has spasmodic episodes of desperately wanting to belong. Some simple Vigenere ciphers are involved, but there’s some terrific discussion of the Beale and Voynich ciphers. Alice was raised by her grandparents - both mathematicians. The book is riddled with math! Alice’s grandmother worked at Benchley Park during the war, but her grandfather was prohibited because of youthful political activity. Her grandmother now spends her time trying to solve the Riemann Hypothesis. During her childhood Alice’s grandfather has her help work on deciphering the Voynich cipher, and has her factoring large composite numbers into their prime factors. He has been secretly, and continuously working on another long unsolved (and fictional) cipher message - the Stevenson/Heath cipher. In fact he’s solve the cipher and could claim the treasure that it leads to, but he won’t because the location of the treasure is now a rare tropical bird sanctuary. Alice’s necklace. The simple Vigenere ciphers slipped under her door.

Dr. Chad Davis must decrypt a CD to find out who’s been hacking the new federal computer-based voting system before the 2004 election. Really badly written and plotted book. The motivations of the characters are murky, scenes that are non-sequiturs are thrown in and the resolution of the plot is abrupt and unclear. The level of explanation of cryptology is correct but very uneven, ranging from descriptions of elementary monoalphabetic ciphers to modern crypto systems.

Dr. Samuel Johnson decrypts a Bacon bilateral cipher and a skytale message to solve the mystery of the disappearance of a Christmas present.

This reference is in Langen’s list, but has not been found anywhere.

Hermes, a Greek-American archaeologist visiting in Athens, is caught up in a series of murders all related to a mysterious ancient artifact - the Golden Thinking Machine. The text includes discussions of the relation of cryptanalysis to general problem solving, cognitive science, language translation, and artificial intelligence. Examples of cryptarithmetic puzzles and one cryptogram generated by an Enigma simulator are
included in the novel.

In this Philo Vance mystery, the amateur detective is called in to help with a series of murders at the Greene Mansion in the upper East side of New York. It seems as though someone has it in for the Greene family, shooting two sons, and two daughters over a several week period, and poisoning the matriarch, Mrs. Greene. The novel has everything, a dark, brooding mansion, a cast of not very likable suspects, mood-setting snowstorms, murder, and lots of dark and stormy nights. There is a seeming cipher message that throws suspicion on one of the family members, but it turns out to be a hoax (and really a rebus, not a cipher).

Bingham Harvard, aka, “The Night Wind” has returned to New York to clear his name of robbery and assault charges and to clean up a gang of corrupt New York City cops. With the help of his wife “Lady Kate” and his best friend, Tom Clancy, Harvard works his way through the clues and the criminals to find the evidence he needs. The key piece is a cipher message (a monoalphabetic substitution cipher) that also contains coded names of the perpetrators.

Professor Liedenbrock and his nephew decipher a sixteenth century transposition cipher in Latin written in Icelandic Runic characters. The message is also written backwards before translation into Runic. The decrypted message sends them on their journey to the center of the earth.

The hero Mathias Sandorff uses a rotating 6 x 6 Cardano grille to encipher a message for a revolution. The villains Torontal and Sarcany intercept Sandorf’s enciphered message steal a copy of the grille to decipher the message. There isn’t any cryptanalysis in the story because the villain steal the grille and use it, but Verne gives a very good description of the system and how to decipher messages in it.

Captain Harry Grant is shipwrecked. Lord Glenarvan, while on the sea trials of his new yacht, finds a bottle containing three mysterious messages in a shark’s stomach. The messages are in English, German, and French, but have been severely damaged by seawater. Together, the messages might reveal Captain Grant’s location. His children, along with Lord Glenarvan set off in search of Captain Grant. Published in the United States under the title “In Search of the Castaways.” Also available on-line at http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2083. The messages are not really cryptograms, but their
translation and joining into a single, coherent message makes good reading.

In this second part of Verne’s “Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon”, Judge Jarriquez uses an approximation of the Babbage/Kasiski method to solve a Gronsfeld cipher and save an innocent man from the gallows. The story contains a good narrative of the Judge’s thought processes as he struggles to solve the cipher message. Also available as an etext at http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/3091

Each of three starship captains carries a third of the key to a one-time-pad cipher. They must cooperate to decipher a message and save a kidnapped family and interstellar civilization itself.

http://books.google.com/books?id=nI89AAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Charles +Walk+%22The+Paternoster+Ruby%22&source=bl&ots=5R3j5uUod6&sig=xSfYH8sob99s4fnCHeUA3S8i0&hl=en&sa=X&ei=fvUbUIy1EeTl2wX-1oDwBw&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Charles%20Walk%20%22The%20Paternoster%20Ruby%22&f=false
The famous, valuable Paternoster ruby has vanished! Felix Page, Chicago millionaire, businessman and owner of the Paternoster ruby has been murdered and the ruby is missing. Detective Swift of the Chicago PD is assigned to the case and must deal with several not pleasant characters (and one very pleasant one in the form of Miss Genevieve Cooper) on his way to a solution. A graphic cipher message is found that leads to the resolution of the disappearance of the ruby.

http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks11/1100571.txt
Mr. Reale, an elderly and successful crook and proprietor of gambling establishments, is killed by one of his associates as he describes how he is going to leave his millions to the person who can solve a puzzle. The puzzle is a poem that is a cipher that must be solved. The solution should lead to the fortune, but instead it leads to another cipher puzzle, a substitution cipher this time.

A code book is stolen out from under the nose of the chief of British intelligence. The thief is killed but the code book is still missing until it’s discovered - transcribed in Braille - in the thief’s dining room. Note that this story is included in the 1965 paperback edition of Famous Stories of Code and Cipher, but not in the original 1947 hardcover edition.

People begin receiving calling cards with the words “The Feathered Serpent”. And then someone who receives a card is murdered. Reporter Peter Derwin smells a story and gets
on the trail of the Feathered Serpent. The novel contains a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher as a clue.

391. ———. *The India-Rubber Men*. London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929. Inspectors Wade and Elk are tracking a gang of criminals in the area of London near the Thames. The gang’s trademark is to dress in rubber masks, crepe rubber shoes, and rubber gloves and to hurl gas bombs to avoid pursuit. When they kidnap the lovely Lila Smith, things get ugly. The Novel contains a simple monoalphabetic substitution cipher message that Inspector Wade dispatches quickly.

392. Walsh, Jill Paton, and Dorothy Sayers. *A Presumption of Death*. New York: St. Martin’s Minotaur, 2002. Harriet Vane Wimsey and Lord Peter Wimsey solve two murders involving German spies in England in the early days of WW2. Cryptogram is in Chapter 7, pages 143-158. Harriet solves a cryptogram sent to her by Peter (who is under cover in German-occupied Europe). The cryptogram is a numeric substitution cipher that uses a poem that Peter had written to Harriet as the key. Each number denotes either the first or last letter of the numbered word in the poem.


394. ———. “The Secret of the Singular Cipher.” In *Old Ebbie Returns*, Hardcover:250–66. London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1925. Old Ebbie solves a homophonic substitution cipher to uncover a Bolshevik plot. The cipher key is three proper names of five, 11, and 14 characters each that are mapped to the letters of the alphabet and to several of the sounds in English words (e.g., ch, sh, wh, th).

395. Wells, Carolyn. *The Diamond Pin*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincotts Publishers, 1919. [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35022/35022-h/35022-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35022/35022-h/35022-h.htm) The key to the whereabouts of dear old (and seemingly murdered) Aunt Ursula’s jewelry is in 39 cipher letters engraved on the head of a diamond pin. The cipher is a very short Vigenere cryptogram that must be solved by finding the key. Detective Fleming Stone and his assistant Fibsy (yes, Fibsy) solve the cipher, which, of course, leads to another puzzle and eventually to the jewels.

396. Wentworth, Patricia. *Hue and Cry*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1927. Mally Lee is hired by Sir George Peterson to be the governess of his daughter, Barbara. Barbara is a budding artist, much to her father’s dismay, and one day when Mally scoops up a set of Barbara’s drawings she inadvertently picks up a coded message. Rather than expose his (illegal and treasonous) dealings, Sir George and his brother-in-law and co-conspirator Mr. Craddock accuse Mally of stealing a priceless diamond broach from her employer. Scotland Yard issues a warrant for Mally and before long she’s on the run.
Scotland Yard is after her, but so is Mr. Craddock, who wants the coded message and will do anything to get it back. The coded message that is so important is a “crossword” puzzle that uses two names from the title of the puzzle as the key to a monoalphabetic substitution cipher and the first letters of each of the crossword clues as the cipher message.

397. White, Ared. Agent B-7. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934. Captain Fox Elton of the counter-espionage unit of G2 in the American Expeditionary Force is sent on a dangerous mission through Germany, the Netherlands, and occupied Belgium in September 1918. He is to uncover and destroy not one, but two spy rings, one run by the German Imperial Secret Service and a freelance ring run by an Austrian masquerading as a Bolshevik Russian who is trying to bring down not only the German Empire, but the Allied Powers as well. Of course there are the beautiful female spies, one English, and one Austrian whose attentions nearly get in the way of Elton’s mission. There are several cryptograms in the novel, all of them using a simple Caesar cipher as the crypto system. Oddly enough, while Elton has no problem deciphering the cryptograms, the spies can’t seem to make any sense of them.

398. ———. The Spy Net. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931. Captain Fox Elton, a counter-espionage agent in G2 of the American Expeditionary Force in France is sent to hunt down a spy net. This Imperial German Secret Service spy ring is run out of Switzerland and is trying to steal the American plans for the St. Mihiel offensive. Elton has to stop them and capture the head of the ring. There are two different cipher systems used in the novel. Several messages are sent using a numeric homophonic cipher system where each plaintext letter has exactly three ciphertext equivalents. The second system is a simple ROT-13 system with a short keyword to scramble the letters in the second row of the substitution alphabet. See Chapters VIII, XVII and XXVIII.

399. Wilde, Percival. Design for Murder. New York: Random House, 1941. A group of n’er-do-well and pretty amoral young rich folks get together at a Connecticut estate and decide to play a game of “murder”. Unfortunately for them the murder turns real and then a second death occurs. There is no real detective here. Each of the players narrates part of the story, imagined as if the people are writing down their impressions as the game and investigation progresses. One solution is proposed, but that suspect is the second victim. A second solution is proposed and the novel ends; but that solution is wrong as well. An appendix to the book contains the real murder’s confession. A null substitution cipher is included in the novel.

400. William, Peter. The Affair at Abu Mina. New York: Macrae Smith Company, 1944. South African secret agent Dan Dupreee is sent into the North African desert during WWII to investigate strange goings-on at Abu Mina. He suspects it is being used as a rendezvous for Rommel’s tanks for their next push against the Allies. Working with a beautiful spy, Eve, Dan uncovers a Nazi collaborator, and the catacombs being used to hide the German tanks. A military code and code book are used in the novel.

British Secret Service agent Philip Clavering is on the trail of a gold snuff box. His colleague the late George Forrest was relieved of the box and murdered with a stiletto on a train from Berlin to Brussels. Clavering wanders Europe in search of the box, conflicted over the affections of the German spy Madeline and his true love Garnet Wolseley. Nobody knows why the box is so important, but it’s imperative that Clavering find it and return it to London. A code message that is an anagram is the key to the mystery of the box.

Godfrey Cairsdale, a British secret agent is sent to Hundary to investigate a group of conspirators that use playing cards (notably the three of clubs) as their secret identification. Waiting for him is Valerie, an Austrian spy, who, of course, falls for him as well. Unfortunately for Valerie, there’s another woman - Virginia, a spunky American who chases after her lover when he disappears. Tragedy is inevitable. The novel contains coded messages that use playing cards as the cipher elements.

Hartley Parrish, successful businessman and country squire is dead. Was it murder or suicide? If it’s murder who did it? His soon-to-be fiancee? Her unrequited lover? The butler? With the discovery of a series of strange letters from an import-export business and a grille, it seems as if murder is on the menu. A grille cipher is key to solving the murder.


Just what the title says. Fifty (typically bad) limericks in code.

William Danner is dragged back into the CIA to uncover a mole. He discovers much more and needs to outrun the CIA, the KGB, and a group of former CIA agents to save himself and his daughter. Danner decrypts a voice message that uses a disguised voice. There are no cryptograms in the novel, but there is a decent description of brute force computer password cracking circa 1983.

The novel contains a book code. No other information available.

Weird things are happening at Camp Hope, a camp for smart kids. Mysterious clues to a supposedly hidden treasure are being left in different campers cabins. Following the clues
is getting dangerous though, as one camper disappears and others are poisoned. What is going on at Camp Hope? There are four different cryptograms in the novel. First a simple monoalphabetic substitution using a mixed alphabet. Next an even simpler substitution using numbers to represent the position of letters in a standard alphabet. Third is a transposition cipher using a nine-letter keyword. The last cryptogram uses a pigpen cipher.

Recently widowed Ben Reese needs something to focus on besides his dead wife and child in order to move on with his life. The focus comes in the form of the murder of an acquaintance, Carl Walker, while Carl is himself on the trail of the 10-year old murder of the woman he loved. The murders both involve a suspected Soviet spy who seems determined to also kill Ben in order to retrieve incriminating photos and papers. Ben and his English professor friend Richard West must decode ciphered clues left to them by Carl before they can uncover the spy and save themselves. Book also touches on the Venona project at Arlington Hall and Richard’s work at Bletchley.

Amateur detective Doctor Hailey solves a murder mystery involving Bolshevik spies. The evidence includes several cryptograms that use the dates from various coins as the key to a monoalphabetic substitution cipher using numbers as cipher letters. The key is used to eliminate some numbers, leaving the remainder as the substitution values.

Black Chamber chief, Nathaniel Greenleaf uncovers a German spy ring, nabs a beautiful spy who was stealing ciphered messages from a White House safe, and deciphers a German transposition cipher.

Our hero, Black Chamber chief Nathaniel Greenleaf, uncovers another spy, saves the reputation of a half-Chinese socialite, and decrypts another cipher.

Yardley’s only novel without any crypto in it at all. It’s a pure spy story, with competing groups of independent spies trying to buy the latest in poison gas. In the middle is newspaperman Larry Moore, who is chasing the story and is madly in love with one of the spies. Really badly written - it’s gotta be nearly 100% Yardley.

413. ———. “The Beautiful Secret Agent.” *Liberty*, 1933.
Head of the Black Chamber, Nathaniel Greenleaf, snares a spy, cracks a cipher, and saves a beautiful double agent.

Nathaniel Greenleaf and his associates at the Black Chamber break up a German spy
ring. Unfortunately, the ring leader - The Blonde Countess gets away. Greenleaf breaks the German ADFGVX cipher. There are also several discussions about secret inks and the ways of developing them.

Nathaniel Greenleaf helps his friend the Police Commissioner solve a peculiar double murder disguised as a suicide. The suicide note and other notes are encrypted in a monoalphabetic cipher that uses symbols to replace individual letters.

From the book jacket: "Peggy Cameron, an American reporter, arrives in Chungking in pre-Pearl Harbor days, determined to bring back to her American newspapers an impartial story of the Sino-Japanese conflict. She elects to stay at a Chinese rest house so that her judgments will not be influenced by officialdom, and in not time she is involved with a mixed group that includes Chinese patriots, enemy agents, and some Americans working as advisers to the Government. Bill Fremont is chief among the Americans, an instructor and leader of the Chinese fighter pilots. Among the other characters are Tina, his Eurasian mistress; Fritz, a German-American of Nazi sympathies, in charge of anti-aircraft; a renegade American doctor; Wang, half brother of Tina, of dubious patriotism; and Sato, a Japanese spy. In spite of her resolve to be impartial, Peggy finds herself entangled in mysterious happenings. It is obvious that the Japanese bombers know too much about important targets in Chungking. The discovery and tracking down of the treachery that is responsible comprises the main part of the story.

Jane Yardley’s second novel is an excellent read. It is at once a mystery story, a coming of age tale, and a ghost story and shines at each. It is 1971 and Jo Starkey is a fifteen-year-old prodigy in a small village in Essex, England. She is at the center of a seriously dysfunctional family, her parents are both doctors, her father an alcoholic who is constantly being stopped for DUI and her mother a workaholic who is never home. Jo’s parents appear hardly at all in the novel, and their absence is the central, empty place at the core of the story. At home are two of Jo’s three brothers. Tarquin, a famous musician who spends all his time in his room coaxing more and more unusual sounds from his Moog synthesizer, and Tim, Jo’s twin and a mathematical genius who also hides himself away. Throw in Geoffrey, brother number three, maniacal sister-in-law Angela, and their out of control toddler Angus and you have a household anyone would be desperate to escape. Jo’s only solace from the madness at home is her friend Frankie, an American transplant whose mother is desperate to leave the Essex countryside and move to London. Jo’s parents are also trying to sell their home, the Red House, but the house doesn’t seem to want to let them go. A decrepit architectural mishmash built by an eighteen century merchant to irritate his wife, the house has a life - or poltergeist - of its own that is actively driving prospective buyers away. Jo and Frankie are convinced that a girl who went missing back in 1963 was murdered and is haunting Red House. In the midst of their investigations along comes Florian, a drop-
dead handsome folk singer that both of the girls fall for. Jo’s investigation into the strange goings-on at Red House centers around a ciphertext message supposedly left for her by Clarence the poltergeist. The message is in a Vigenère cipher and Yardley does a good job of explaining substitution ciphers and Vigenère ciphers in particular. Without any reference books, Jo re-invents the Kasiski method (she is a prodigy, after all) and solves the cipher, only to discover that it’s a superencipherment of a book code. Deduction and a lucky guess lead her to the book and to the key. The resulting plaintext proves critical to solving the murder mystery and uncovering Clarence’s true identity. Yardley’s story moves along quickly, the characters are engaging and well drawn, and a plot twist at the end helps bring about a strange and interesting ending. The novel is very well written and highly recommended.

   Two young cable operators at Guantanamo Bay are murdered and Special Investigator Bill Duncan is sent to solve the case. He’s helped by a nurse who is also the wife of the Base doctor. A puncture cipher message is a clue to the murderer. (A puncture cipher system puts small holes under the letters of the plaintext message.)

   Retired college professor and amateur detective Ponsonby solves a cipher for an old friend. It is a substitution cipher using a variation of the same cipher used in The Gold-Bug. The key is in the unenciphered part of the message.

   Professor Ponsonby solves a 30-year-old cipher message embedded in a newspaper and uncovers the fate of a Soviet spy. The cipher is a combination of a book code (using the newspaper as the book) and a substitution that replaces letters in the code words with letters from a fake cryptogram in the newspaper.

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