

Name _____

Read the text and answer the questions below

Women Spies during World War II

The summer of 1941 was a difficult time for Britain and her European allies in the war. The Nazis were bombing key cities across the country and much of Europe had fallen to the Germans, leaving Britain vulnerable. This made the work of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), and the actions of women within it, that much more important.

Established in June 1940 in London, the SOE was a volunteer force set up to practice a secret war behind enemy lines. Intelligence agencies realized fairly early on during the war the important part women could play in spying, in what had been traditionally considered the domain of men. Women were thought to be more discreet as spies, and capitalized on this perception during the war, carrying out tasks and missions that men were unable to do. In the field, women could go unnoticed as messengers delivering vital information, with one SOE officer from Holland noting that in 1944, women were rarely stopped and searched at checkpoints.

In some instances, women spies took big risks and they had a great influence in the development of the war conflict. As historian Juliette Pattinson notes, “several wartime accounts indicate that male agents were less skilled and inventive than their female colleagues.”

The SOE had sent 39 women to Occupied France by the time of the D-Day invasions on June 6, 1944. Because it was crucial that they evade suspicion, the SOE recruited agents who could speak French and adapt to French life. Each agent was given a codename or an alias, and trained in specialist skills, including radio operations, how to maintain a cover story and how to open locks.

Adapted from “Inside the Stories of the Most Daring Women Spies of World War II,” Time, 2 October 2020. <https://bit.ly/3fbcjWp>

Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Copy the evidence from the text

a) Women began working as spies at the end of the war.

b) Historical evidence shows that men were better spies than women.

In your own words and based on the ideas in the text, answer the following questions. Do not copy from the text

a) What are the two reasons why Great Britain was in a hard situation during the summer of 1941?

b) Why was speaking French required to be a good spy?

Find the words in the text that mean

a) challenging

b) quite

c) seldom

d) every

Complete the following sentences. Use the appropriate form of the word in brackets when given

a) _____ (consider) the most dangerous of all allied spies by the Gestapo, Virginia Hall was particularly good _____ opening locks.

b) _____ women spies worked very hard during World War II, they were paid less _____ men.

c) According _____ official files, there were more than 200 women _____ served as double spies during the war.

Complete the following sentence to report what was said

“Who is your preferred woman spy?”

My friend asked me

Write a summary of the text in about 50 words