



# Secret Language: Codes, Tricks, Spies, Thieves, and Symbols

*Barry J. Blake*

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## **Secret Language: Codes, Tricks, Spies, Thieves, and Symbols** Barry J. Blake

This book is about language that is designed to mean what it does not seem to mean. Ciphers and codes conceal messages and protect secrets. Symbol and magic hide meanings to delight or imperil. Languages made to baffle and confuse let insiders talk openly without being understood by those beyond the circle.

Barry Blake looks at these and many more. He explores the history and uses of the slangs and argots of schools and trades. He traces the centuries-old cants used by sailors and criminals in Britain, among them Polari, the mix of Italian, Yiddish, and slang once spoken among strolling players and circus folk and taken up by gays in the twentieth century. He examines the sacred languages of ancient cults and religions, uncovers the workings of onomancy, spells, and gematria, looks into the obliqueness of allusion and parody, and celebrates the absurdities of euphemism and jargon.

Secret Language takes the reader on fascinating excursions down obscure byways of language, ranging across time and culture. With revelations on every page it will entertain anyone with an urge to know more about the most arcane and curious uses of language.

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