



Yardleygram

In 1932, Herbert Yardley of the American Black Chamber, the forerunner of the NSA, published a book of cryptographic puzzles called *Yardleygrams*. It is set as a fictional challenge between an old spy and a young man interested in codes.

What follows is a paraphrase of one of his ciphers. It can be solved with a pencil and paper. Yardley recommends using graph paper.

Airplane Cipher

Intelligence was worried about German observations of US troop deployments. “During the final period of the war we were advised that an airplane had been making certain rather peculiar maneuvers off the south coast of Long Island.” A cryptographer observed the airplane.

“It didn’t take him long to discover what was going on. The pilot was, apparently, indulging in stunt flying. But by carefully following the trajectory of one tip of the plane wing, our observer was able to trace a series of letters ...”

ciphertext: rqvkm efaud xugrq ainag lipbc rokjj l

decipher: On a piece of graph paper, take the first letter of the ciphertext and continue the alphabet in vertical columns. Take it to at least thirteen letters deep.

Then, just like Wordfind or Jumble, look for diagonal words in the filled squares.