

SIMPLIFIED READERS

B1

LEVEL 4

The Thirty-Nine Steps

JOHN BUCHAN



WORKSHEETS

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ABOUT THE NOVEL

The Thirty-Nine Steps is a thriller novel written by Scottish author and politician John Buchan. It is the first of the five novels. As Buchan's son later explained, the name of the book originated when his sister, who was six at that time, was counting the stairs of the private nursing house where Buchan stayed during his illness. The book was published in 1915, prior to the World War I, after first appearing as a serial adventure story in *Blackwood's Magazine* and attracted a wide range of reader. The book was a major success with enduring popularity. When it was released, *The Telegraph*, a national British daily broadsheet newspaper, called the novel "one of the finest thrillers ever written". It has never been out of print and has been adopted to the films. What makes this novel so popular is not only the plot but also is its archetypal character. Richard Hannay is the earliest examples of the "man-on-the-run", a man who sacrifices his life for his country. He is believed to predate latter British heroes like James Bond. *Thirty-Nine Steps* is a classic of early twentieth-century literature and still has a universal popularity.

SUMMARY

After returning from South Africa, Richard Hannay thinks London is not exciting enough for his fast-paced lifestyle. He receives an American visitor in his flat who has a secret. His name is Franklin P. Scudder, and he reveals his secret identity as a freelance spy. He entrusts Hannay with the details of his current mission. Scudder is discovered by a secret organisation who wants to start a war by killing Greek Prime Minister and needs to hide. Hannay allows him to stay in his flat, but few days later, he finds Scudder dead, with a knife on his back. He decides to run away as he is the prime suspect of the murder and being watched by the same men who kill Scudder. He leaves the flat in disguise, wearing milkman's clothes with the black notebook which is full of codes written by Scudder. Although he has no place to go, he keeps running as he is pursued not only by the terrorist organisation but also the police that investigate Scudder's death. On the run, he manages to break the codes and finds out that a group of German anarchists, the Black Stone, plan to steal British naval intelligence to establish a naval blockade and start a war across Europe. He takes a train to Scotland and finds an inn where he spends a couple of days until two men search for him. The inn keeper sends them away, but they come back. Hannay eventually drives off in the car he steals from them.

After leaving the inn, he realises that he is pursued by an aeroplane. He decides to drive fast and stay off the main road to prevent the vigilance, but he crashes into another car driven by a local landowner and politician, Harry Bullivant. Bullivant takes Hannay home as he blames himself for the crash. He tells Hannay that he is on his way to make a speech about the colonies in an election meeting but suffers from stage fright. After seeing Hannay has a deep knowledge, he wants him to deliver the speech on behalf of him. Hannay accepts and delivers the speech. As Bullivant seems trustworthy,

Hannay tells his story. He believes him and willingly writes a letter to his godfather at Foreign Office to ask for his help. Hannay sets off again but is spotted again by the aeroplane. He bumps into a roadmender who complains about being tired. Hannay offers him to swap the clothes and work for him. After tricking the pursuers by pretending to be a roadmender, he arrives in a mansion owned by a man who is a member of the Black Stone. Hannay does not reveal his real identity, swearing to be someone else, but the old man locks him up. In his captivity, Hannay finds some explosives and uses them to blast the room apart. He goes to the roadmender's house to take his possessions back and return his. Since he is badly hurt due to explosion, roadmender offers help and provides him a shelter for a few days to recover. He gets on a train to return to London and meets Sir Walter. He explains the situation, but Sir Walter does not believe the Greek Premier's murder plot till he receives a phone call from London telling the Greek Premier has been just assassinated. Next day, he clears Hannay's name in Scudder's murder case. Bullivant and Hannay attend a meeting that night which is organised to discuss the military intelligence. Hannay recognises one of the attendants as the traitor, a member of the Black Stone. Hannay remembers a code from the black notebook, describing "thirty-nine steps" and "high tide" at 20:17. They make research about the lodges with steps. Only Trafalgar Lodge has thirty-nine steps, leading down to the beach. They make a plan and go to the lodge. The Black Stone unmask during the game of cards, and Hannay blows the whistle as a signal to his men to arrest them. One of them makes his way to the yacht, but other boats have been already taken. Three men are arrested. As the Black Stone has planned, the UK enters World War I three weeks later, and Hannay is appointed as a captain in the army.

Discuss before you begin reading:

- 1 Are you good at breaking secret codes?
- 2 Would you help a friend if they were in trouble and in need of help?
- 3 Have you ever solved a mystery?

A Word Search

Find the 18 hidden words in the puzzle. The definitions of these words are given in Exercise B.

S	D	H	F	D	L	E	O	D	G	U	E	S	S	Z
A	P	I	G	O	V	E	E	G	P	O	B	A	O	A
O	P	D	S	E	O	E	S	A	H	V	M	F	F	C
F	K	O	I	A	C	R	D	U	S	S	F	E	T	B
Z	C	L	L	C	P	V	P	D	F	T	R	S	G	C
V	E	R	U	O	E	P	N	N	D	E	T	A	I	L
B	R	S	I	N	G	E	O	J	T	M	R	B	T	H
V	X	H	T	M	T	I	V	I	S	Z	M	B	E	R
E	W	U	L	E	I	V	Z	P	N	V	H	Q	R	A
I	R	B	R	B	H	N	V	E	B	T	L	C	C	E
E	O	P	Q	R	X	K	A	N	P	I	E	B	E	P
C	O	U	R	A	G	E	V	L	M	M	M	D	S	P
E	L	B	A	E	G	D	E	L	W	O	N	K	Y	A
T	N	E	C	O	N	N	I	Y	S	U	C	O	F	R
H	F	O	E	J	U	I	P	X	D	W	H	T	E	A

B Definitions of the hidden words:

- 1 an unusual, exciting or dangerous experience, journey or series of events:

- 2 to say that you are sorry for doing something wrong or causing a problem:

- 3 to start to be seen:

- 4 to think that something is true, correct or real:

- 5 the ability to do something dangerous without showing fear:

- 6 someone who commits a crime:

- 7 the small features of something that you only notice when you look carefully:

- 8 unhappy and upset because something you hoped for has not happened or has not been as good, successful, etc. as you expected:

- 9 to give attention, effort, etc. to one particular subject, situation or person rather than another:

- 10 an attempt to give an answer or an opinion when you cannot be certain if you are right:

- 11 not guilty of a crime:

- 12 knowing a lot:

- 13 to behave as if something is true when you know that it is not, especially to make other people believe something that is not true:

- 14 information, documents, etc. that show that something is true:

- 15 to say that you will not do something that somebody has asked you to do:

- 16 not in danger or likely to be harmed:

- 17 a fact that is known by only a small number of people and is not told to anyone else:

- 18 to manage to do something:

A When you finish reading Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, look at the chart below and put a tick (✓) next to the information that applies to the names at the top. Then, skim through the chapters and check.

Who...	Richard Hannay	Franklin P. Scudder	The milkman	The owner of the hotel	Sir Harry	Alexander Turnbull
didn't find England as he expected?						
was killed because he knew a secret?						
called himself Captain Theophilus Digby?						
found his guest dead in his room?						
initially had the little black notebook?						
lent the main character his cap, his coat and some bottles?						
escaped from the police and got on a train to Galloway?						
wanted to hear interesting stories and write a book?						
helped the main character to get rid of the two evil men that came to the hotel?						
found the answer to the code in the black notebook?						
was a candidate for the election and was going to give a speech?						
did the main character meet just after the car accident?						
had stopped farming and now was working on the roadside?						
lent his accessories to the main character?						

B When you finish reading Chapter 3, put the events below in the same order as they appear in it.

- 1 _____ Hannay found a farmhouse while he was running away from the men on the hills and entered the house.
- _____ Richard Hannay saw a secret airfield where planes could land easily, without people even noticing them landing.
- _____ In the room the men locked Hannay, he found an explosive, and he blew up the house with it.
- _____ Hannay turned back to find Turnbull and get his clothes back. He stayed with him for some time and then left to meet Sir Walter.
- _____ Hannay climbed out into the garden through the hole in the wall after he became conscious again and found a dovecot to hide for a while.
- _____ While Hannay were talking to the man in the farmhouse, he realized that he was the most dangerous man in the world that Scudder was talking about and that he was in the hands of his enemies, so he tried to figure out an escape plan.

Now go back to the chapter and check your ordering.

A Decide who says the following, to whom and when. Write your answers in the blanks.

1 "I'm sorry. I'm a little nervous. You see, at this moment I am dead."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

2 "Do you think that adventure is found only in strange places? Maybe you're sitting next to it at this moment."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

3 "I won't let you go. If you are Mr Ainslie, you will soon prove it."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

4 "You want your clothes. Come in. You look terrible. Come, sit down."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

5 "It's good that you know your own name."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

6 "Mr Hannay will interest you again. He has a lot to tell you, but not today. I want you to tell Mr Hannay that you don't want to arrest him anymore."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

7 "Scudder knew where they were going to leave the country. Tomorrow is the day, and it is somewhere where high tide is at 10:17 pm."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

8 "He is safe. You cannot follow him. He is gone. He has won. The Black Stone has won."

who _____ to whom _____ when _____

B Fill in the blanks with the words listed below.

<i>refused</i>	<i>disappointed</i>	<i>movement</i>	<i>private</i>	<i>arrest</i>
<i>surrounded</i>	<i>realized</i>	<i>cliff</i>	<i>escaped</i>	<i>criminals</i>

While Sir Walter and his guests were in a heated discussion in his house, Hannay ¹ _____ that the sentence about thirty-nine steps in Scudder's notebook was actually a clue about the secret place where the ² _____ were going to leave the country. After a careful search, they finally found a house called Trafalgar Lodge on top of a ³ _____ which had steps down to a ⁴ _____ beach. The police ⁵ _____ the house, and Hannay went inside to ⁶ _____ the men there. The men ⁷ _____ the claim that they are the murderers of Scudder and invited Hannay to a game of cards. While sitting at the table, Hannay saw the old man tapping his fingers on his knee, and this ⁸ _____ reminded Hannay of the evil man that Scudder talked about and he met at the farmhouse. After some time, Hannay blew his whistle for the police to take action. At that moment, one of the men in the room ⁹ _____ from the window and was running down the stairs to the beach. The old man thought he could run away, but Hannay told him the news that was going to make him ¹⁰ _____: They already had the boat *Ariadne* in their hands, so the man's plan to run away with it was prevented.

TEST YOURSELF

TOTAL

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THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS by John Buchan

B1 - Level 4

A Mark the sentences as True (T) or False (F). (10x3=30 pts)

- ___1 Scudder was one of the members of the Black Stone.
- ___2 The police arrested the roadman and sent him to prison because he killed Scudder.
- ___3 Hannay lied about Sir Harry's speech and said it was great because he needed his help.
- ___4 Hannay tried to puzzle the man in the farmhouse because he realized that he was his enemy.
- ___5 The secret song between Sir Walter and Hannay was "Annie Laurie".
- ___6 Scudder wrote a letter to Sir Walter on the 31st of May.
- ___7 Sir Walter didn't believe what Scudder said about Karolides, but the news he got proved him wrong.
- ___8 Sir Walter took Hannay to Scotland Yard to give him to the police because he thought he was the murderer.
- ___9 Hannay was right about his doubts about Lord Alloa; the First Sea Lord that came to the meeting was not real Lord Alloa.
- ___10 The boat Scaife and Hannay found was called Trafalgar Lodge.

B Complete the sentences. (5x4=20 pts)

- 1 Scudder was a bit nervous and wanted to speak to Hannay because _____.
- 2 Hannay couldn't go to the police after Scudder was killed, and he wanted to carry out Scudder's plan, so _____.
- 3 When Hannay jumped into the bushes to escape from the train, the farmer in the train started to shout because _____.
- 4 Scudder's letters took some time to reach Sir Walter because _____.
- 5 At first, Hannay had doubts about the men in Trafalgar Lodge because _____.

C Match the words with their meanings. (5x4=20 pts)

- a carry out b describe c surround
d doubt e guilty

- ___1 responsible for breaking a law
- ___2 to say what sb/sth is like
- ___3 a feeling of being uncertain about sth or not believing sth
- ___4 to do and complete a task
- ___5 to be all around sb/sth

D Mark the correct answers. (10x3=30 pts)

1 Who is the main character in the story?

- a Franklin P. Scudder
b Richard Hannay
c Franz

2 Why was the note "thirty-nine steps" in Scudder's notebook important?

- a It gave a clue about the place Hannay was looking for.
b It was the name of the plan the spies had.
c It was the name of the street Hannay lived in Africa.

3 What is the name of the secret organization that wanted a war and Hannay was trying to find?

- a Ariadne b Annie Laurie c Black Stone

4 How did Hannay escape from the farmhouse?

- a He exploded the house.
b He asked Sir Harry for help.
c He stole the police's car.

5 Hannay was followed by a ---- for a few times during the story.

- a train b bicycle c plane

6 Hannay took a shirt, a cap and (a) ---- with him before he left his house in London.

- a toothbrush b newspaper c pair of glasses

7 What was Hannay's job in Africa?

- a He was the Head of the Navy.
b He was a mining engineer.
c He was a milkman.

8 Which is correct about Marmaduke Jopley?

- a Richard Hannay liked him so much.
b He was among the enemies of Hannay that wanted a war.
c He was a man spending time around rich people to get money.

9 Hannay thought to himself when he saw Scudder's dead body that he had also killed a few men in ----.

- a Scotland b Matabele War c England

10 How did the story end?

- a Hannay stopped the plans of the spies.
b The spies escaped from the police and started a war.
c The police arrested Hannay for Scudder's murder.

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