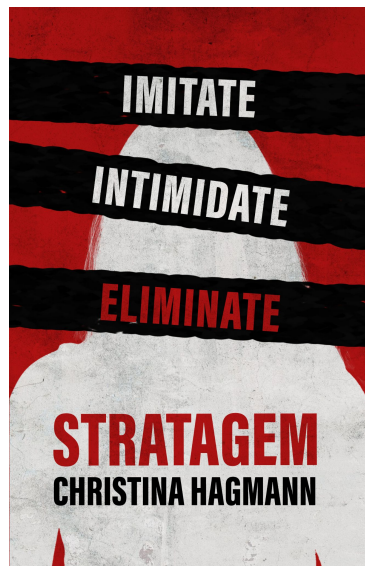


Stratagem

By Christina Hagmann



Teaching Unit

Novel Overview: *Stratagem* by Christina Haggmann

Stratagem follows seventeen-year-old Meda, a mimic who can take on the appearance of others. Forced to work for a shadowy organization called the Agency, Meda's world changes when she's kidnapped by three teenage boys—Brody, Aaron, and Dan—who know her secret. Caught between the Agency and a resistance group called the Opposition, Meda must confront difficult truths about her mother, her identity, and where her loyalties lie.

Unit Plan Structure (15 days)

Week 1: Introduction and Reading (Chapters 1-13)

- Day 1: Introduction to novel and themes
- Day 2-3: Reading and discussion (Chapters 1-7)
- Day 4-5: Reading and discussion (Chapters 8-13)

Week 2: Analysis and Character Study (Chapters 14-28)

- Day 6-7: Reading and discussion (Chapters 14-20)
- Day 8-9: Reading and discussion (Chapters 21-28)
- Day 10: Character analysis activities

Week 3: Conclusion and Assessments (Chapters 29-36)

- Day 11-12: Reading and discussion (Chapters 29-36)
- Day 13: Theme analysis and literary devices
- Day 14-15: Final projects and assessments

Detailed Lesson Plans and Activities

Introduction to Novel and Themes

Discussion Questions:

- What does "stratagem" mean? How might this relate to the novel?
- What moral dilemmas might arise when someone can become someone else?

Activity: Identity Exploration

- Students create an identity map with aspects that make them who they are
- Connect to themes of identity that will appear in the novel

Reading and Discussion Questions

Chapters 1-7: Meda's Kidnapping and Introduction to Mimics

Discussion Questions:

- How does Meda initially view her captors? How does this change?
- What moral conflicts does Meda face regarding her abilities?
- How does the author build tension in these early chapters?

Activity: Perspective Writing

- Write a diary entry from Aaron's perspective about finding his sister

Chapters 8-13: Developing Relationships and Truth Revealed

Discussion Questions:

- How does Brody's treatment of Meda differ from Aaron's? Why?
- What effect does learning about her part in Aaron's family's death have on Meda?
- How does Meda's understanding of "trust" evolve in these chapters?

Activity: Character Motivations Chart

- Create a chart tracking the motivations of Meda, Brody, Aaron, and Dan

Chapters 14-20: Family Reunion and Betrayal

Discussion Questions:

- How does reuniting with her family affect Meda?
- What does Dan's death reveal about the stakes in this conflict?
- How does the author use setting to enhance the mood of these chapters?

Activity: Moral Dilemma Analysis

- Students discuss what they would do in Meda's position at the zoo

Chapters 21-28: Confronting Truth and Identity

Discussion Questions:

- How does Meda's relationship with her identity change in these chapters?
- What does Meda learn about her mother and how does it affect her?
- How does Brody serve as a moral anchor for Meda?

Activity: Internal/External Conflict Map

- Create a visual representation of Meda's internal and external conflicts

Chapters 29-36: Resolution and Choices

Discussion Questions:

- How has Meda changed from the beginning of the novel?
- What themes about identity, trust, and loyalty emerge by the end?
- Is Meda's final choice to kill her mother justified?

Character, Theme, and Literary Devices Analysis Activities

Character Analysis Activities

Character Evolution Trackers

- Track how characters change throughout the novel
- Focus on Meda, Brody, Aaron, and Isi

Character Relationship Web

- Create a visual representation of relationships between characters
- Analyze how these relationships influence plot development

Theme Analysis

Central Themes to Explore:

1. Identity and self-discovery
2. Trust and betrayal
3. Family bonds (biological vs. chosen)
4. Moral ambiguity and choice
5. Power and control
6. Loyalty and sacrifice

Activity: Theme Exploration Stations

- Students rotate between stations focused on different themes
- Gather evidence and analyze how themes develop across the novel

Literary Devices Analysis

Devices to Highlight:

- Symbolism (Meda's earrings, shifting appearances)
- Foreshadowing
- Dramatic irony
- Characterization techniques
- Setting as mood enhancement

Activity: Literary Devices Scavenger Hunt

- Locate and analyze examples of literary devices in the text

Stratagem Reading Guide: Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 1-7: Meda's Kidnapping and Introduction to Mimics

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is Meda's assignment at the beginning of the novel? What is she supposed to do with Mr. Gray?
2. Who are the three boys who kidnap Meda? Describe each of them.
3. What happens when Meda tries to escape by shifting into Brody?
4. What does Aaron discover about Meda's connection to his family?
5. Where do the boys take Meda after they escape from the cabin?
6. What is silver's effect on Meda? How do the boys use this knowledge?
7. What do we learn about Meda's past and her family in these chapters?

Analysis Questions:

1. Analyze the relationship dynamic between Brody, Aaron, and Dan. How do their personalities and roles complement or conflict with each other?
2. How does the author establish tension in the first few chapters? Identify specific techniques and their effectiveness.
3. Compare how Meda feels about her abilities with how the boys view them. What does this reveal about her character?
4. How does Meda's relationship with Aaron evolve after she learns about his family? What does this suggest about guilt and responsibility?
5. What role does trust play in these early chapters? Who trusts whom, and why is this significant?
6. Meda thinks she must not show any signs of weakness. How does Meda use this strategy throughout these chapters, and is it effective?
7. Analyze Brody's treatment of Meda compared to Aaron's. What motivates each of them to act as they do?

Discussion and Journal Prompts:

1. If you suddenly discovered you had the ability to shift into anyone, how would you use this ability? What moral questions would you need to consider?
2. Write from Aaron's perspective after learning Meda was involved in his family's deaths. How might he be feeling and thinking?
3. "You can't see things that are too close to you." How does this quote apply to Meda's understanding of her situation?

Stratagem Reading Guide: Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 8-13: Developing Relationships and Truth Revealed

Comprehension Questions:

1. What does Meda learn about her mother from Brody?
2. Describe the safe house where the group stays. Who runs it and what is it like?
3. What does Aaron do for Meda when she's injured? Why is this significant?
4. What plan does Smith outline for rescuing Meda's family?
5. What happens during the zoo rescue mission? Who interferes?
6. Who is Isi and what is her connection to Meda's mother?
7. How does Dan get injured, and what happens to him?

Analysis Questions:

1. Analyze how the setting of Judge's house affects the tone of the novel. What does this environment reveal about the Opposition?
2. How does the author develop Meda's character through her relationships with Brody, Aaron, and Dan? Provide specific examples.
3. "I didn't trust him. He seemed too nice." Why does Meda struggle to trust Brody? What does this reveal about her past experiences?
4. Examine the different types of strength demonstrated by characters in these chapters. Who shows strength, and in what ways?
5. How does the author use foreshadowing in these chapters to hint at later developments?
6. Analyze the symbolism of Meda's earrings. What do they represent to her and why are they significant?
7. "Dan said not to trust anyone." How is this advice both helpful and problematic for Meda?

Discussion and Journal Prompts:

1. Compare and contrast the Agency and the Opposition based on what we know so far. Are they truly different?
2. Meda struggles with feeling responsible for others getting hurt. Write about a time when you felt responsible for something beyond your control.
3. How important is family in shaping our identity? Discuss using examples from both the novel and real life.

Stratagem Reading Guide: Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 14-20: Family Reunion and Betrayal

Comprehension Questions:

1. Describe the Opposition headquarters. How does it differ from previous settings?
2. What happens when Meda is reunited with her father and sisters?
3. Who attacks the Opposition's hotel headquarters and why?
4. What happens to Dan? How do the characters react?
5. What does Meda learn about her mother from Isi?
6. How does Meda's relationship with Brody develop in these chapters?
7. What plan does Smith have for Meda after the attack?

Analysis Questions:

1. How does the author use the emotional high of family reunion to contrast with the later tragedy? What is the effect of this technique?
2. Analyze the changing dynamics between Meda, Aaron, and Brody after Dan's death. How does grief affect each character?
3. Examine how loss shapes the characters' motivations and choices.
4. How does the conflict between Meda's biological family and her "found family" with the boys develop in these chapters?
5. Analyze the use of setting in these chapters. How does the contrast between luxury hotel and violent conflict add meaning?
6. What moral dilemmas does Meda face in these chapters, and how does she resolve them?
7. Examine how Meda's understanding of her mother evolves. What conflicting emotions does she experience?

Discussion and Journal Prompts:

1. Write about a time when you had to choose between doing what was safe and doing what was right.
2. How do people typically react to grief? Compare the reactions of characters in the novel to what you've experienced or observed.
3. Sometimes, it's the little things that we hold onto that help us remember who we are. What small objects or memories help define your identity?

Stratagem Reading Guide: Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 21-28: Confronting Truth and Identity

Comprehension Questions:

1. How does Meda respond to Dan's death? What does she do?
2. What does Meda learn about her real father?
3. What is Meda's role in the plan to stop the Agency?
4. What happens when Meda encounters her mother and Isi?
5. What does Meda learn about her mother's true feelings?
6. What is the Agency's ultimate plan involving the nuclear power plant?
7. How does Meda's relationship with Brody change during these chapters?

Analysis Questions:

1. Analyze how the author portrays grief through various characters. Which portrayal seems most realistic and why?
2. Examine the concept of protection and how it's used both to help and control in the novel.
3. How does the revelation about Meda's biological father affect her sense of identity? What does this suggest about nature versus nurture?
4. Analyze the power dynamics between Meda's mother and Isi. How do these dynamics reflect broader themes in the novel?
5. Examine how the concept of normalcy is presented and questioned throughout these chapters. What might a "normal life" look like to Meda? Brody? Her mother?
6. How does the author build tension leading up to the confrontation between Meda, her mother, and Isi?
7. Analyze the symbolism of Meda's shifting ability as it relates to her internal identity struggles.

Discussion and Journal Prompts:

1. Would you rather know difficult truths or be protected from them? Discuss using examples from both the novel and personal experience.
2. Is Meda's mother entirely evil, or are there understandable reasons for her choices? Write a defense or prosecution of her character.
3. "Maybe control was only an illusion, and even people who looked in control felt the same way I did." Discuss a time when you realized someone in authority was struggling just like you.

Stratagem Reading Guide: Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 29-36: Resolution and Choices

Comprehension Questions:

1. How does Meda infiltrate the White House? Who is she pretending to be?
2. What discovery does Meda make about "John" from the Agency?
3. What happens when Meda confronts her mother and Isi?
4. What decision does Meda ultimately make regarding her mother?
5. What happens to Isi after the confrontation?
6. What does Meda do at the press conference? Why is this significant?
7. How does the novel end for Meda and Brody?

Analysis Questions:

1. Analyze how Meda's approach to her abilities has changed by the end of the novel.
2. How does the White House setting create both literal and symbolic significance for the novel's climax?
3. Analyze Meda's mother's confidence that Meda wouldn't shoot her. What does this reveal about their relationship?
4. Examine the moral complexity of Meda's decision to kill her mother. Was it justified? What factors influenced her choice?
5. "I never let anyone know how I felt because I was taught to be secretive. I was taught to feel guilt for revealing anything." How has Meda's approach to vulnerability changed by the end of the novel?
6. Analyze the press conference scene. How does this represent Meda taking control of her own story?
7. "See, I always knew you were capable of doing the right thing." Analyze how the concept of "the right thing" evolves throughout the novel.

Discussion and Journal Prompts:

1. Do you think Meda made the right choice regarding her mother? Support your opinion with evidence from the text.
2. How has Meda changed from the beginning of the novel to the end? What caused these changes?
3. If you were to write an epilogue for the novel set five years in the future, what would happen to each of the main characters?
4. "We both know the Opposition needs you, not only for their own reasons, but to help people like you and families like yours. But one day, when we decide we've done enough, we will live our lives for us, not them." Discuss the balance between duty to others and living for yourself.

Answer Key: Stratagem Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 1-7: Meda's Kidnapping and Introduction to Mimics

Comprehension Questions:

- What is Meda's assignment at the beginning of the novel? What is she supposed to do with Mr. Gray?**
 - Meda's assignment is to infiltrate Mr. Gray's security team, as he is part of the President's security detail. She is supposed to use him as a "pass-through" to eventually take over as the President.
- Who are the three boys who kidnap Meda? Describe each of them.**
 - Aaron: Blond, intense, the leader, angry and aggressive toward Meda
 - Brody: Dark-haired, calm, compassionate, treats Meda with kindness
 - Dan: Shaggy-haired, more carefree, acts as the driver, Aaron's cousin
- What happens when Meda tries to escape by shifting into Brody?**
 - She succeeds in taking Brody's form, but her clothes give her away since they're stretched out to accommodate Brody's larger frame. Aaron recognizes that something is wrong and points his gun at her.
- What does Aaron discover about Meda's connection to his family?**
 - Aaron learns that Meda had previously shifted into his father (Reg Monroe), and was involved in discrediting him, which led to his family's murder being staged as a murder-suicide.
- Where do the boys take Meda after they escape from the cabin?**
 - They take her to an underground bunker that was built by Aaron's father.
- What is silver's effect on Meda? How do the boys use this knowledge?**
 - Silver burns Meda's skin and prevents her from shifting. The boys use silver handcuffs to restrain her and prevent her from changing forms.
- What do we learn about Meda's past and her family in these chapters?**
 - Meda's father is a librarian; she has twin sisters named Ginger and Georgia. Her mother left when she was young. She was homeschooled until age 10, then entered public school where she struggled to fit in. Her ability to shift emerged at puberty, and her father tried to protect her by warning her not to use her abilities.

Analysis Questions:

- Analyze the relationship dynamic between Brody, Aaron, and Dan. How do their personalities and roles complement or conflict with each other?**
 - Aaron is the intense leader driven by revenge; Brody is the moral compass who balances Aaron's anger; Dan provides comic relief and practical skills (driving). Aaron and Brody sometimes clash over their treatment of Meda, with Brody advocating for compassion and Aaron maintaining hostility.
- How does the author establish tension in the first few chapters? What techniques does she use?**
 - The author creates tension through immediate physical danger (kidnapping), uncertainty about the boys' motives, Meda's attempts to escape, and the revelation about Aaron's family. The limited perspective keeps readers in Meda's position of not knowing what will happen next.
- Compare how Meda feels about her abilities with how the boys view them. What does this reveal about her character?**
 - Meda sees her abilities as a burden and something to hide, resulting from years of secrecy and then exploitation by the Agency. The boys initially view her abilities with fear (Aaron), fascination (Dan), and appreciation (Brody). This reveals Meda's self-loathing and how she's internalized others' negative perceptions of her.
- How does Meda's relationship with Aaron evolve after she learns about his family? What does this suggest about guilt and responsibility?**
 - After learning about her role in his family's death, Meda feels immense guilt but accepts Aaron's anger as justified. She doesn't defend herself or make excuses, suggesting she accepts responsibility for her actions even though she was coerced.
- What role does trust play in these early chapters? Who trusts whom, and why is this significant?**
 - Trust is fragile and complicated: Meda doesn't trust the boys initially; Aaron refuses to trust Meda; Brody cautiously extends trust to Meda; Dan is more trusting than the others. Trust becomes a currency in their interactions, with Brody's willingness to trust Meda creating a foundation for their later relationship.
- "I knew enough not to show any signs of weakness." How does Meda use this strategy throughout these chapters, and is it effective?**
 - Meda tries to appear strong by hiding pain, fear, and emotions, particularly around Aaron. This strategy is partially effective in protecting her from further attacks but prevents deeper connections and understanding with the boys, particularly Brody.
- Analyze Brody's treatment of Meda compared to Aaron's. What motivates each of them to act as they do?**
 - Brody shows compassion and sees Meda as a victim of circumstance, motivated by his belief in seeing good in people and his own experience with a complicated family situation. Aaron treats Meda with hostility and violence, motivated by grief and rage over his family's deaths.

Answer Key: Stratagem Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 8-13: Developing Relationships and Truth Revealed

Comprehension Questions:

- 1. What does Meda learn about her mother from Brody?**
 - Meda learns that her mother may have been working for the Agency. Brody reveals that Reg Monroe wanted to help mimics and stop the Agency, suggesting her mother might have been involved with them.
- 2. Describe the safe house where the group stays. Who runs it and what is it like?**
 - The safe house is rundown with peeling paint and car parts scattered around. It's run by Judge, a military-type man who shows disdain toward Meda for being a mimic. The house is unwelcoming and potentially dangerous for Meda.
- 3. What does Aaron do for Meda when she's injured? Why is this significant?**
 - Aaron removes a tracking device from Meda's leg and stitches her wound. This is significant because it shows the first sign of him helping her rather than hurting her, indicating a slight shift in their relationship.
- 4. What plan does Smith outline for rescuing Meda's family?**
 - Smith plans a "switch" at the zoo where Meda will impersonate her stepmother Beth, allowing them to rescue her father and sisters while taking Beth into custody.
- 5. What happens during the zoo rescue mission? Who interferes?**
 - The family rescue succeeds, but as they're escaping, Isi (another mimic) and a shooter appear. Dan is shot while driving, and they have a car accident. Meda notices that the shooter briefly shifted to look like her mother.
- 6. Who is Isi and what is her connection to Meda's mother?**
 - Isi is a younger mimic who works for the Agency. She was trained by Meda's mother and sees her as a mother figure. She's described as a ruthless assassin, unlike Meda.
- 7. How does Dan get injured, and what happens to him?**
 - Dan is shot while driving the getaway car from the zoo. By the end of Chapter 13, he has died from his injuries, devastating Brody and Aaron.

Analysis Questions:

- 1. Analyze how the setting of Judge's house affects the tone of the novel. What does this environment reveal about the Opposition?**
 - The unsafe, unwelcoming environment creates a tone of suspicion and danger. It reveals that the Opposition, while opposed to the Agency, isn't necessarily "good" - they have their own prejudices and questionable methods, suggesting moral ambiguity rather than clear heroes.
- 2. How does the author develop Meda's character through her relationships with Brody, Aaron, and Dan? Provide specific examples.**
 - Through Brody, we see Meda's capacity for trust and affection; through Aaron, we see her guilt, resilience, and moral compass; through Dan, we see her protectiveness and compassion. Each relationship reveals different facets of her character.
- 3. "I didn't trust him. He seemed too nice." Why does Meda struggle to trust Brody? What does this reveal about her past experiences?**
 - Meda struggles to trust Brody because his kindness seems suspicious to her, revealing how her experiences at the Agency taught her that kindness usually comes with manipulation and ulterior motives. Her inability to accept genuine compassion shows how deeply traumatized she is.
- 4. Examine the different types of strength demonstrated by characters in these chapters. Who shows strength, and in what ways?**
 - Meda shows endurance and resilience by withstanding pain and trauma; Brody shows emotional strength through compassion and moral certainty; Aaron shows determination through his mission for justice; Dan shows loyalty by standing by his friends despite danger.
- 5. How does the author use foreshadowing in these chapters to hint at later developments?**
 - The author foreshadows: Meda's mother's involvement through mentions of her past; the appearance of another mimic (Isi); potential betrayal through Judge's hostility; and danger through Dan's casual attitude about trust.
- 6. Analyze the symbolism of Meda's earrings. What do they represent to her and why are they significant?**
 - The earrings symbolize Meda's connection to her past and her mother, representing the only part of her identity that remains constant while everything else changes. They're significant because they're the one thing she refuses to give up, showing her need to maintain some sense of self.
- 7. "Dan said not to trust anyone." How is this advice both helpful and problematic for Meda?**
 - This advice is helpful as it protects Meda from potential betrayal in a dangerous situation. However, it's problematic because it prevents her from forming necessary alliances and emotional connections, particularly with Brody, who genuinely wants to help her.

Answer Key: Stratagem Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 14-20: Family Reunion and Betrayal

Comprehension Questions:

- Describe the Opposition headquarters. How does it differ from previous settings?**
 - The Opposition headquarters is a luxury high-rise hotel suite with security measures, including retinal scanners. It's clean, spacious, and well-appointed - drastically different from the shabby safe house and underground bunker.
- What happens when Meda is reunited with her father and sisters?**
 - Meda has an emotional reunion with her father and sisters. Her sisters are excited to see her, and her father is overwhelmed with emotion. They're able to hug and connect briefly before being separated again.
- Who attacks the Opposition's hotel headquarters and why?**
 - Isi attacks, presumably under orders from the Agency or Meda's mother, to recapture Meda and eliminate the Opposition's leaders.
- What happens to Dan? How do the characters react?**
 - Dan dies from his gunshot wound. Aaron is devastated but shows it through anger; Brody is openly emotional; Meda feels responsible and guilty, retreating into depression and refusing to eat.
- What does Meda learn about her mother from Isi?**
 - Meda learns that her mother (Ava) trained Isi, that she might not have truly loved Meda or her father, and that she may have willingly returned to the Agency rather than being taken.
- How does Meda's relationship with Brody develop in these chapters?**
 - Their relationship deepens as they share their first kiss on the rooftop. Brody confesses his feelings for Meda and promises to protect her. Their romantic connection strengthens.
- What plan does Smith have for Meda after the attack?**
 - Smith wants Meda to impersonate the First Lady to stop the Agency's plot involving the President, possibly having to confront her mother or Isi.

Analysis Questions:

- How does the author use the emotional high of family reunion to contrast with the later tragedy? What is the effect of this technique?**
 - The author creates emotional whiplash by placing the joyful family reunion directly before Dan's death. This technique heightens the tragedy's impact and reflects the novel's theme that happiness is fragile and can be suddenly shattered.
- Analyze the changing dynamics between Meda, Aaron, and Brody after Dan's death. How does grief affect each character?**
 - Grief drives Aaron further into anger and suspicion; Brody becomes more protective of those he has left; Meda withdraws and blames herself. Their dynamic fractures as they process grief differently, creating additional tension.
- Examine how loss shapes the characters' motivations and choices.**
 - Loss motivates Aaron's revenge; fuels Brody's protective instincts; and initially paralyzes Meda with guilt. For all characters, fear of further loss influences their decisions about trust, risk, and vulnerability.
- How does the conflict between Meda's biological family and her "found family" with the boys develop in these chapters?**
 - The conflict intensifies as Meda must choose between staying with her biological family and fulfilling her obligation to the boys. Her rescue of her family should provide closure, but instead creates new complications as she realizes her responsibility to those who helped her.
- Analyze the use of setting in these chapters. How does the contrast between luxury hotel and violent conflict add meaning?**
 - The luxury setting creates false security that's violently shattered, symbolizing how appearances can be deceiving. The contrast highlights the idea that danger exists even in seemingly safe environments, reinforcing themes of constant vigilance and appearances versus reality.
- What moral dilemmas does Meda face in these chapters, and how does she resolve them?**
 - Meda faces dilemmas about whether to help the Opposition after losing Dan, whether to put herself at risk again, and whether to trust her growing feelings for Brody. She initially resolves them through withdrawal but eventually chooses action over passivity.
- Examine how Meda's understanding of her mother evolves. What conflicting emotions does she experience?**
 - Meda experiences conflict between her childhood memories of a loving mother and new revelations suggesting her mother never truly cared. She feels betrayal, confusion, anger, and lingering hope that the revelations aren't true.

Answer Key: Stratagem Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 21-28: Confronting Truth and Identity

Comprehension Questions:

- How does Meda respond to Dan's death? What does she do?**
 - Meda withdraws completely, refusing to eat or speak to anyone. She gives up and resigns herself to captivity, feeling responsible for Dan's death.
- What does Meda learn about her real father?**
 - She learns that her biological father is named Chayton, one of the original mimics and founders of the Agency. Her mother met him at the Agency and became pregnant before running away.
- What is Meda's role in the plan to stop the Agency?**
 - Meda is to impersonate the First Lady, get into the White House, and stop the Agency's plan involving a nuclear power plant meltdown. She may need to confront her mother or Isi.
- What happens when Meda encounters her mother and Isi?**
 - Meda finds her mother (disguised as the President) and Isi in a confrontation at the White House. Her mother has shot Isi and reveals her plan to kill them both to secure her position in the Agency.
- What does Meda learn about her mother's true feelings?**
 - Meda learns that her mother never truly loved her or her adoptive father. Her mother admits she grew bored with family life and chose to return to the Agency willingly.
- What is the Agency's ultimate plan involving the nuclear power plant?**
 - The Agency plans to cause a nuclear meltdown at the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant in Plymouth, Massachusetts. This would create a crisis that would help the Vice President (who has Agency connections) get re-elected.
- How does Meda's relationship with Brody change during these chapters?**
 - Meda and Brody's relationship deepens despite her initial withdrawal. They eventually spend the night together before her mission, and both confess their love for each other.

Analysis Questions:

- Analyze how the author portrays grief through various characters. Which portrayal seems most realistic and why?**
 - The author shows grief through Aaron's anger, Brody's quiet sadness, and Meda's complete withdrawal. Meda's portrayal seems most realistic because it captures the numbing, paralyzing quality of profound grief and guilt, particularly for someone already traumatized.
- Examine the concept of protection and how it's used both to help and control in the novel.**
 - Protection is a double-edged sword: the Agency "protects" Meda's family to control her; the Opposition "protects" her family by separating them from her; Brody tries to protect Meda while respecting her agency. Protection becomes both a genuine expression of care and a form of manipulation.
- How does the revelation about Meda's biological father affect her sense of identity? What does this suggest about nature versus nurture?**
 - The revelation complicates Meda's identity by suggesting her mimic abilities come from both parents, not just her mother. This raises questions about whether her nature (biological heritage) determines her fate more than her nurture (being raised by her adoptive father).
- Analyze the power dynamics between Meda's mother and Isi. How do these dynamics reflect broader themes in the novel?**
 - Their relationship mirrors abusive power dynamics: Ava exploits Isi's need for maternal approval while showing no genuine care. This reflects broader themes of manipulation, false loyalty, and how emotional vulnerabilities can be weaponized.
- Examine how the concept of normalcy is presented and questioned throughout these chapters. What might a "normal life" look like to Meda? Brody? Her mother?**
 - "Normal life" is presented as simultaneously desirable and impossible for Meda. The novel questions whether someone with her experiences and abilities can ever truly have normalcy, suggesting that authenticity might be more important than conformity.
- How does the author build tension leading up to the confrontation between Meda, her mother, and Isi?**
 - The author builds tension through: Meda's increasing anxiety as she infiltrates the White House; environmental details creating a sense of isolation; uncertainty about the President's identity; and the gradual revelation of her mother's betrayal.
- Analyze the symbolism of Meda's shifting ability as it relates to her internal identity struggles.**
 - Meda's shifting symbolizes her uncertain identity and adaptability. Her struggle to maintain her true self while literally becoming others mirrors her internal conflict about who she really is and who she wants to be amid others' expectations and manipulations.

Answer Key: Stratagem Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Chapters 29-36: Resolution and Choices

Comprehension Questions:

- How does Meda infiltrate the White House? Who is she pretending to be?**
 - Meda infiltrates the White House by impersonating the First Lady after the Opposition arranges for the real First Lady to be sedated and taken to a safe location.
- What discovery does Meda make about "John" from the Agency?**
 - Meda discovers that John never existed - he was likely her biological father (Chayton) in disguise, visiting her in secret.
- What happens when Meda confronts her mother and Isi?**
 - Meda finds her mother (disguised as the President) has shot Isi (disguised as a staff member). Her mother reveals her plan to kill both Isi and Meda, take credit for saving the mission, and advance in the Agency.
- What decision does Meda ultimately make regarding her mother?**
 - Meda shoots and kills her mother when she is about to kill Isi.
- What happens to Isi after the confrontation?**
 - Isi, despite being wounded, stays behind to impersonate the President temporarily. She arranges for Meda to escape and takes credit for stopping the assassination attempt.
- What does Meda do at the press conference? Why is this significant?**
 - Meda (in disguise) holds a press conference revealing the truth about Reginald Monroe's death and the Vice President's connections to terrorism and the nuclear plant plot. This is significant because she's taking control of the narrative and seeking justice for Aaron's family.
- How does the novel end for Meda and Brody?**
 - They plan to continue working with the Opposition but take time away at a country cottage. Brody suggests they could eventually settle down together when they've "done enough." They express their love for each other and hope for a future together.

Analysis Questions:

- Analyze how Meda's approach to her abilities has changed by the end of the novel.**
 - Meda has become more strategic and thoughtful about her abilities rather than simply following orders. She considers consequences and makes informed choices about when and how to use her powers, showing increased agency and responsibility.
- How does the White House setting create both literal and symbolic significance for the novel's climax?**
 - Literally, the White House provides a secure, high-stakes environment that raises tensions. Symbolically, it represents American power and democracy, making it the perfect setting for a confrontation about who controls the country's future and what values will prevail.
- Analyze Meda's mother's confidence that Meda wouldn't shoot her. What does this reveal about their relationship?**
 - Her mother's confidence reveals her fundamental misunderstanding of Meda - she sees her as weak and incapable of action, showing how little she truly knows her daughter. It also reveals her narcissistic belief that maternal bonds would override Meda's moral compass.
- Examine the moral complexity of Meda's decision to kill her mother. Was it justified? What factors influenced her choice?**
 - Meda's decision is morally complex because she's killing her own mother, but it's in defense of Isi and potentially many others. Factors influencing her choice include: her mother's explicit threat to kill her, the revelation of her mother's true nature, and Meda's emerging moral clarity about stopping violence.
- "I never let anyone know how I felt because I was taught to be secretive. I was taught to feel guilt for revealing anything." How has Meda's approach to vulnerability changed by the end of the novel?**
 - Meda transitions from viewing vulnerability as dangerous to recognizing its value in authentic relationships. With Brody, she learns to express her feelings openly, showing how she's breaking the cycle of secrecy and isolation instilled by her upbringing.
- Analyze the press conference scene. How does this represent Meda taking control of her own story?**
 - The press conference represents Meda using truth as power - rather than manipulation or violence. By exposing secrets publicly, she rejects the secrecy that defined both the Agency and her personal history, symbolically claiming her voice and agency.
- "See, I always knew you were capable of doing the right thing." Analyze how the concept of "the right thing" evolves throughout the novel.**
 - "The right thing" evolves from simple obedience (at the start) to complex moral choices balancing competing loyalties. By the end, Meda defines "right" through her own moral compass rather than external authority, showing her ethical maturation.

1. What is Meda's mission at the beginning of the novel?

- a) To assassinate Mr. Gray
- b) To infiltrate Mr. Gray's security team as a first step to impersonating the President
- c) To kidnap Mr. Gray's family
- d) To gather intelligence on Mr. Gray's business dealings

2. How do Aaron, Brody, and Dan capture Meda?

- a) They drug her food at a restaurant
- b) They ambush her outside Mr. Gray's house and force her into their vehicle
- c) They blackmail her with information about her family
- d) They pose as Agency officials and trick her

3. What happens when Meda tries to escape by shifting into Brody?

- a) She succeeds and escapes temporarily
- b) Her disguise is perfect, but her clothing gives her away
- c) Aaron recognizes her despite the disguise
- d) She has trouble maintaining the form because she's injured

4. What special weakness do mimics have that the boys use against Meda?

- a) They cannot shift when exposed to bright light
- b) They become disoriented around other mimics
- c) Silver burns their skin and prevents them from shifting
- d) They cannot maintain a disguise when they're sleeping

5. What devastating truth does Meda learn about her connection to Aaron?

- a) She helped frame his father, leading to his family's murder-suicide
- b) She is secretly related to him through her biological father
- c) She accidentally exposed his family to the Agency
- d) She was the intended target, but his family was mistakenly killed

6. How does Brody generally treat Meda compared to Aaron?

- a) They both treat her with hostility and distrust
- b) Brody shows her compassion while Aaron is angry and violent
- c) Brody is manipulative while Aaron is straightforward
- d) They both warm up to her equally by the end of these chapters

7. What does Meda reveal about her family background?

- a) She was raised by her grandparents after her parents died
- b) Her father is a librarian and she has twin sisters
- c) She was an only child raised by a single mother
- d) She grew up in the Agency with no real family

8. How do the boys escape with Meda when the Agency attacks their cabin?

- a) They use a helicopter from the roof
- b) They escape through an underground tunnel
- c) They disguise themselves as Agency agents
- d) They create a diversion with explosives

1. What happens at Judge's safe house regarding Meda?
 - a) She's treated with respect and as an equal
 - b) They remove a tracking device from her leg
 - c) She manages to escape temporarily
 - d) She reveals her plan to betray the Opposition
2. What surprising action does Aaron take that shows a change in his attitude toward Meda?
 - a) He apologizes for his earlier behavior
 - b) He helps treat her wound and protects her from another man
 - c) He teaches her how to use a gun
 - d) He tells her about his family's connection to her mother
3. What happens during the zoo rescue mission?
 - a) Meda is reunited with her family but has to leave them behind
 - b) Meda's sisters are captured by the Agency
 - c) Meda successfully reunites with her family but Dan is shot
 - d) The mission is completely abandoned when the Agency appears
4. Who is revealed to be Meda's mother during the escape?
 - a) Beth, her stepmother
 - b) A woman named Ava who had been impersonating her mother
 - c) The woman posing as her mother was actually Isi in disguise
 - d) A hotel staff member named Cynthia
5. What unusual ability does Meda have that makes her valuable?
 - a) She can maintain multiple disguises simultaneously
 - b) She can store the forms of people she's shifted into and reuse them later
 - c) She can shift without needing to touch the person first
 - d) She can maintain a disguise longer than other mimics
6. What symbolic item does Brody replace for Meda?
 - a) Her silver locket
 - b) Her mother's wedding ring
 - c) Her diamond earrings
 - d) Her father's watch
7. What is Dan's fate by the end of Chapter 13?
 - a) He's captured by the Agency
 - b) He's killed during the escape from the zoo
 - c) He's wounded and his condition is uncertain
 - d) He escapes but is separated from the group
8. What does Meda learn about Isi?
 - a) She is Meda's biological sister
 - b) She was trained by Meda's mother and sees her as a mother figure
 - c) She is working as a double agent against the Agency
 - d) She is actually older than Meda's mother

1. Where does the Opposition take Meda and the boys after the zoo incident?

- a) A military bunker
- b) A luxury hotel in Chicago
- c) An abandoned warehouse
- d) A private hospital

2. What happens to Dan?

- a) He recovers from his injuries
- b) He is captured by the Agency
- c) He dies from his gunshot wound
- d) He betrays the group to the Agency

3. What truth does Meda learn about her mother from Isi?

- a) Her mother never truly loved her
- b) Her mother has been dead for years
- c) Her mother is working with the Opposition secretly
- d) Her mother is actually her aunt

4. How do Brody and Meda's relationship change in these chapters?

- a) They become increasingly suspicious of each other
- b) They grow closer and admit their feelings for each other
- c) They decide to maintain a professional relationship only
- d) They have a major argument that damages their trust

5. What plan does Smith outline for Meda after the attack?

- a) She must impersonate the First Lady to stop the Agency's plan
- b) She needs to confront her mother directly at the Agency
- c) She should go into hiding with her family
- d) She must infiltrate a nuclear power plant

6. How does Aaron react to Dan's death?

- a) He blames himself and becomes withdrawn
- b) He blames Meda and becomes even more hostile
- c) He cries openly and seeks comfort from Brody
- d) He immediately plans revenge against the Agency

7. What does Meda record for Brody after Dan's death?

- a) A confession about her feelings for him
- b) Evidence against her mother
- c) A warning about an upcoming attack
- d) Instructions for if she doesn't return

8. What surprising survival skill does Meda demonstrate in these chapters?

- a) She fights off multiple Agency agents
- b) She shows unexpected marksmanship at the shooting range
- c) She successfully drives a getaway car
- d) She hacks into the Agency's computer system

1. What does Meda learn about her real father?
 - a) He is still alive and works for the Agency
 - b) He was killed by her mother years ago
 - c) He is named Chayton and is a founder of the Agency
 - d) He is actually Judge from the safe house
2. What is the Agency's ultimate plan involving the nuclear power plant?
 - a) To steal nuclear material
 - b) To cause a meltdown as a false flag operation
 - c) To frame the Opposition for an attack
 - d) To test a new type of nuclear energy
3. What revelation does Meda have about "John" from the Agency?
 - a) He was actually working for the Opposition
 - b) He might have been her biological father in disguise
 - c) He never existed - someone was shifting to visit her
 - d) He was actually Isi gathering information
4. What is Meda supposed to do as the First Lady?
 - a) Stop the President from signing legislation
 - b) Gather intelligence on the Vice President
 - c) Kill her mother or Isi if she encounters them
 - d) Expose the Agency's plan to the media
5. Where does the confrontation between Meda, her mother, and Isi take place?
 - a) At the nuclear power plant
 - b) In the White House
 - c) At Opposition headquarters
 - d) At the safe house
6. What does Meda's mother tell her about her life with George (Meda's adoptive father)?
 - a) She genuinely loved him at first but grew bored
 - b) She was forced to marry him by the Agency
 - c) She never loved him and was only using him
 - d) She still loves him but can never return
7. How does Isi get injured during the confrontation?
 - a) Meda shoots her accidentally
 - b) She's injured while trying to escape
 - c) Meda's mother shoots her
 - d) She injures herself as a diversion
8. What truth does Isi reveal about Meda's abilities?
 - a) Meda is losing her abilities as she gets older
 - b) Meda has greater potential because she was born of two mimics
 - c) Meda's abilities are artificial and created by the Agency
 - d) Meda can teach others to become mimics

1. What ultimately happens to Meda's mother?
 - a) She escapes but is later captured by the Opposition
 - b) She surrenders and agrees to work with the Opposition
 - c) Meda shoots and kills her
 - d) Isi kills her while Meda hesitates
2. What does Isi decide to do after the confrontation?
 - a) She escapes and disappears
 - b) She stays to impersonate the President temporarily
 - c) She defects to the Opposition
 - d) She returns to the Agency as a double agent
3. What public action does Meda take at the press conference?
 - a) She exposes the existence of mimics to the world
 - b) She reveals the truth about Reginald Monroe and the Vice President's connections to terrorism
 - c) She announces her own identity as a mimic
 - d) She falsely claims responsibility for the assassination attempt
4. What happens to Meda's family by the end of the novel?
 - a) They are relocated with new identities near D.C.
 - b) They are captured by the Agency
 - c) They join Meda and Brody in hiding
 - d) They are sent to live with relatives overseas
1. How does Meda's father react when she tells him she killed her mother?
 - a) He is proud of her for doing what was necessary
 - b) He is angry and blames her
 - c) He is heartbroken and admits he still hoped her mother would return
 - d) He is relieved that the danger is finally over
2. What does Brody suggest about their future at the end of the novel?
 - a) They should continue working for the Opposition indefinitely
 - b) They should go into hiding immediately
 - c) They could eventually settle down together when they've "done enough"
 - d) They should return to school and live normal lives
3. What quote from Sun Tzu does Isi share with Meda?
 - a) "Know thy enemy as thyself"
 - b) "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting"
 - c) "If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat"
 - d) "Victorious warriors win first and then go to war"
4. How does Meda describe her change by the end of the novel?
 - a) She realizes she's become just like her mother
 - b) She sees that she used to be like her father, only seeing what she wanted to see
 - c) She acknowledges she hasn't changed at all
 - d) She decides she's completely different from both of her parents

Stratagem Chapter Quizzes

Answer Keys

Chapters 1-7:

1. b
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. a
6. b
7. b
8. b

Chapters 8-13:

1. b
2. b
3. c
4. b
5. b
6. c
7. b
8. b

Chapters 14-20:

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. a
6. b
7. a
8. b

Chapters 21-28:

1. c
2. b
3. c
4. c
5. b
6. a
7. c
8. b

Chapters 29-36

1. c
2. b
3. b
4. a
5. c
6. c
7. c
8. b

Stratagem Close Reading Activities

Activity 1: Introducing Meda's Ability (Pages 7-10)

Passage: From "You don't want these people to know you're here..." to "...Brody stepped forward and everything went dark."

Focus: Character development, foreshadowing, and the introduction of supernatural elements

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. During your first reading, underline any phrases that describe Meda's physical sensations.
3. During your second reading, circle words that create tension or suspense.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the author introduce Meda's shifting ability without explicitly explaining it?
2. What physical sensations accompany Meda's shifting? Why do you think the author includes these details?
3. How does Brody react to Meda's ability? What does this reveal about his character?
4. How does Meda react to silver?
5. What information does the author withhold, and how does this uncertainty create suspense?

Activity 2: Aaron's Family Tragedy (Pages 49-52)

Passage: From "Do you remember this man..." to "To the memory of Aaron's father."

Focus: Revelation of backstory, character motivation, and emotional impact

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. During your first reading, underline details about what happened to Aaron's family.
3. During your second reading, circle Meda's emotional reactions to this information.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the author reveal important backstory through dialogue rather than narration?
2. What is the significance of Brody's statement, "I often spent the night at the Monroe's, especially when my dad was on a bender."?
3. How does Meda's guilt manifest in her thoughts and actions?
4. What might this mean for Meda and Aaron's relationship moving forward?

Stratagem Close Reading Activities

Activity 3: Meda's First Meeting with Isi (Pages 87-89)

Passage: From "Then, my mother flickered..." to "...I turned and began running."

Focus: Character contrast, tension, and foreshadowing

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. During your first reading, underline descriptions of Isi's appearance and behavior.
3. During your second reading, highlight words or phrases that create danger or tension.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the author establish Isi as a contrasting character to Meda?
2. What information does Isi reveal about Meda's mother, and why is this significant?
3. How does the setting contribute to the tension in this scene?
4. What does Isi's interactions with Meda suggest about her character and future role?

Activity 4: Dan's Death and Its Aftermath (Pages 146-149)

Passage: From "I paced nervously, waiting to hear about Dan..." to "Not because I wanted to."

Focus: Grief, guilt, and emotional impact

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. During your first reading, highlight sentences that convey Meda's emotions.
3. During your second reading, circle words that relate to blame or responsibility.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the author convey grief through Meda's perspective?
2. Analyze the sentence structure and pacing in this passage. How do these elements enhance the emotional impact?
3. What does Meda's reaction to Dan's death reveal about her character development?
4. How does this event affect the relationships between the surviving characters?
5. When Meda thinks, "Couldn't we be human for a minute?" what is ironic about that question? How do people see her?
6. What does Meda mean when she thinks, "No one would ever leave me alone."

Stratagem Close Reading Activities

Activity 5: Meda's Confrontation with Her Mother (Pages 220-226)

Passage: From "My mother's jaw was set..." to "Then, I closed my eyes."

Focus: Climactic conflict, character revelation, and moral decision-making

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. During your first reading, underline what Meda's mother reveals about herself.
3. During your second reading, circle words or phrases that show Meda's internal conflict.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the dialogue reveal character in this passage?
2. What techniques does the author use to build tension as the scene progresses?
3. What does her mother mean when she says: "It was easier for you because you never knew who you were in the first place."?
4. How does the setting (the White House) add significance to this confrontation?
5. Analyze the final line, "I closed my eyes." What does this simple action suggest about Meda's decision?

Activity 6: Meda's Identity Journey (Pages 238-243)

Passage: From "I didn't know how to feel about seeing my father..." to "I guess I had changed."

Focus: Identity, belonging, and character growth

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. During your first reading, highlight phrases that show Meda's thoughts about her identity.
3. During your second reading, underline evidence of how Meda has changed.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does Meda's understanding of her father compare to her earlier views?
2. What does the line "I realized I used to be like my dad, trying to push away the bad and only see the good" reveal about Meda's transformation?
3. How does the author use setting to reflect Meda's emotional journey?
4. What does this passage suggest about the relationship between truth and happiness?

Advanced Literary Analysis Activities for Stratagem

Activity 1: Point of View and Perspective

Passage Selection: Pages 146-149, from "Men were stationed by the door" to "Not because I wanted to."

Focus: First-person limited perspective and its effects

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage twice, paying special attention to Meda's thoughts and observations.
2. Highlight phrases that show information only Meda would know.
3. Underline places where Meda interprets others' behaviors or motivations.
4. Circle moments where Meda might be an unreliable narrator.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the first-person perspective shape our understanding of the confrontation between Meda and Isi and what happened at the zoo?
2. What information is withheld from readers because of the limited perspective? How might this scene read differently from Isi's perspective?
3. How does the author convey other characters' emotions through Meda's observations?
4. Analyze this line: "I knew it meant I would do whatever Smith said, for Brody, and Aaron, and for Dan. Not because I wanted to." How does the internal thought reveal Meda's complex motivations in ways dialogue couldn't?
5. How reliable is Meda as a narrator in this passage? Provide evidence for your assessment.

Extension: Rewrite a portion of this scene from Brody's perspective, considering what different insights this change would provide.

Advanced Literary Analysis Activities for Stratagem

Activity 2: Narrative Structure

Multi-Passage Analysis:

- Pages 1-9: The opening kidnapping scene
- Pages 139-145: The confrontation with Isi at the zoo
- Pages 220-225: The climactic confrontation with Meda's mother

Focus: Plot structure, pacing, and suspense

Instructions for Students:

1. Examine all three passages, noting similarities and differences in how tension is created.
2. For each passage, identify:
 - The initial situation/problem
 - Complications that arise
 - The turning point
 - The resolution or outcome
3. Create a visual timeline showing how these three key scenes function in the overall narrative arc.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the author use pacing differently in each passage? Where does she slow down or speed up the narrative, and why?
2. Compare the opening of each scene. How does the author establish context while immediately engaging the reader?
3. Analyze the use of dialogue versus description in creating tension across these scenes.
4. How do these scenes build upon each other? What connecting threads (character development, themes, symbols) run through all three?
5. How does the author use chapter endings to drive the narrative forward?

Extension: Choose another pivotal scene from the novel and analyze how it uses similar or different narrative techniques to advance the plot.

Advanced Literary Analysis Activities for Stratagem

Activity 3: Characterization Techniques

Passage Selection: Ch. 10, Ch. 22, Ch. 31

Focus: Direct and indirect characterization of Meda, her mother, and Brody

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. Create a three-column chart with the headings: "Meda," "Meda's Mother," and "Brody."
3. Under each character, record examples of:
 - Direct characterization (explicit statements about personality)
 - Indirect characterization through the STEAL STRATEGY:
 - Speech
 - Thoughts
 - Effect on others
 - Actions
 - Looks or appearance

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the author use memory and flashback to develop Meda's character?
2. Analyze this line: "Then I remembered one other thing..." How does the revelation about her mother's makeup ritual deepen our understanding of both characters?
3. How do Meda's internal reflections about her mother contrast with her external actions?
4. What techniques does the author use to make Brody a complex character rather than simply "the love interest"?
5. How does Meda's self-perception differ from how others perceive her? What does this reveal about her character?

Extension: Track how one character's portrayal evolves across three different chapters, noting changes in characterization techniques.

Advanced Literary Analysis Activities for Stratagem

Activity 4: Setting as Literary Element

Passage Selection: Pages 34-40, from "The walls were made of large cement blocks, and everything was gray."

Focus: Setting's influence on mood, character, and theme

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage twice.
2. During the first reading, highlight all descriptions of physical setting and environment.
3. During the second reading, underline how characters interact with or are affected by the setting.
4. Create a sketch or diagram of the underground bunker based on textual details.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the underground bunker setting reflect Meda's emotional state? Identify specific textual evidence.
2. Analyze how the confined space affects interactions between characters, particularly Meda and Aaron.
3. What symbolic meaning might the bunker have in relation to themes of imprisonment, secrets, and control?
4. How does this setting contrast with previous settings in the novel? What does this contrast emphasize?
5. The author writes: "I didn't want to look at him. I saw the oddly peaceful blue sky, and then, behind Aaron, I saw Brody trying to get up the steps to us, but Dan was holding him back." How does the setting amplify the tension in this confrontation?

Extension: Compare the bunker setting to at least two other significant settings in the novel (the hotel, the White House, etc.). How does each setting contribute to different themes?

Advanced Literary Analysis Activities for Stratagem

Activity 5: Integrated Literary Analysis

Passage Selection: Chapter 21 - Pages 160--167

Focus: Integration of POV, narrative structure, characterization, and setting

Instructions for Students:

1. Read the passage carefully twice.
2. Create a four-section annotation guide:
 - POV/Perspective: Note Meda's biases, limitations in knowledge, interpretations
 - Structure: Identify exposition, rising action, climax, falling action in this scene
 - Characterization: Note techniques used to develop Meda, Brody, and Aaron
 - Setting: Highlight details of the physical environment and its effects

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the first-person POV create dramatic irony when Meda sees Aaron and Brody but doesn't understand what they're feeling?
2. Analyze how the author structures this scene to create a moment of tension followed by emotional release.
3. What characterization techniques reveal Brody's internal conflict without directly stating it?
4. How does the hotel hallway setting—a transitional, public space—contribute to the scene's emotional impact?
5. How do these four literary elements (POV, structure, characterization, setting) work together to develop the theme of trust in this passage?

Extension: Select another passage where all four literary elements work together effectively and analyze their combined impact.

Stratagem Vocabulary

Grade 7 Vocabulary

1. **Stratagem** - a clever plan or scheme designed to achieve a specific goal
2. **Embankment** - a raised bank or mound of earth
3. **Rickety** - weak and likely to collapse
4. **Ominous** - giving the impression that something bad is going to happen
5. **Menacing** - threatening or causing fear
6. **Sullen** - showing irritation or ill humor by a gloomy silence
7. **Ethereal** - extremely delicate and light in a way that seems not to be of this world
8. **Adamant** - refusing to be persuaded or to change one's mind
9. **Mundane** - lacking interest or excitement; ordinary
10. **Treacherous** - dangerous because of hidden or unpredictable risks

Grade 8 Vocabulary

1. **Feral** - wild, untamed, or existing in a natural state
2. **Malicious** - characterized by malice; intending or intended to do harm
3. **Pristine** - in its original condition; unspoiled
4. **Facade** - an outward appearance that conceals a less pleasant reality
5. **Infiltrate** - enter or gain access to an organization or place secretly
6. **Incandescent** - emitting light as a result of being heated
7. **Impeccable** - in accordance with the highest standards; perfect
8. **Converge** - come together from different directions to meet
9. **Condescension** - an attitude of patronizing superiority
10. **Incessant** - continuing without pause or interruption

Grade 9 Vocabulary

1. **Subterfuge** - deceit used in order to achieve one's goal
2. **Imposter** - a person who pretends to be someone else in order to deceive others
3. **Desolate** - feeling or showing misery, unhappiness, or loneliness
4. **Narcissistic** - having an excessive interest in or admiration of oneself
5. **Coerce** - persuade (an unwilling person) to do something by using force or threats
6. **Scrutinize** - examine or inspect closely and thoroughly
7. **Formidable** - inspiring fear or respect through being impressively powerful or capable
8. **Reconnaissance** - military observation of a region to locate an enemy or determine strategic features
9. **Contingency** - a future event or circumstance which is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty
10. **Disoriented** - having lost one's sense of direction, position, or relationship with one's surroundings

Grade 10 Vocabulary

1. **Egotistical** - excessively conceited or absorbed in oneself
2. **Pragmatic** - dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way based on practical considerations
3. **Reparation** - the making of amends for a wrong one has done
4. **Ambiguous** - open to more than one interpretation; not having one obvious meaning
5. **Dilapidated** - (of a building or object) in a state of disrepair or ruin due to age or neglect
6. **Convolutd** - extremely complex and difficult to follow
7. **Exhilarating** - making one feel very happy, animated, or elated
8. **Vindictive** - having or showing a strong desire for revenge
9. **Redemptive** - acting to save someone from error, evil, or the consequences of sin
10. **Animosity** - strong hostility or opposition

Instructions for Students

- Read each quote from the novel "Stratagem" carefully
- Match each quote to the correct vocabulary word from the word bank
- Be prepared to explain how the context clues in the quote help reveal the meaning of the word

Word Bank

Stratagem ethereal menacing malicious scrutinize subterfuge impeccable formidable narcissistic redemptive pragmatic disoriented contingency vindictive ambiguous

1. "The streetlights cast an _____ glow in the night. Conveniently but not surprisingly, the streetlight by Mr. Gray's house was burnt out."
2. "_____, " Isi whispered to me. "Schemes. _____, if you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat."
3. "We all know that sometimes, good people are put in bad situations. Sometimes, good people can't help the things they do, but that doesn't mean they're still not good inside." This is an example of _____ thinking—trying to make things right again.
4. "I studied the man for a moment as though weighing the risks of giving him an answer. 'It's our little fallout shelter, for when we need to get off the grid. Aaron's dad built it, and no, he wasn't a _____ freak. He knew what was going on.'"
5. "This was meant to be my longest placement ever. I myself wondered how sustainable it would be." I was going to impersonate someone important as part of a _____ to achieve a larger goal.
6. "This woman was going to kill me. She is a(n) _____ bitch. Even I know that," Isi said about my mother, referencing her desire for revenge.
7. "Smith was not as calm as he had been at our last meeting. I took a seat across the desk from him. Brody sat down in the seat next to me but didn't look at me. I tried to pretend everything was okay between us." The tension was very _____ as we couldn't tell if things were truly fine or not.

Instructions for Students

- Read each quote from the novel "Stratagem" carefully
- Match each quote to the correct vocabulary word from the word bank
- Be prepared to explain how the context clues in the quote help reveal the meaning of the word

Word Bank

Stratagem ethereal menacing malicious scrutinize subterfuge impeccable formidable narcissistic redemptive pragmatic disoriented contingency vindictive ambiguous

8. "My mother laughed. 'Oh, honey, I will. There is nothing stopping me. Certainly Meda won't stop me.' She looked at me out of the corner of her eye. Isi looked at me as well. 'The funny thing is,' my mother continued, 'you two both needed a mother so badly that it was sad.'" This revealed how _____ my mother was, only caring about herself.
9. "Smith stood in front of me. 'We're going to start you out with some tapes of the First Lady.' He directed me to a sofa with a flat screen set up in front of it. I settled in and began to _____ all the details of her mannerisms."
10. "She was dressed in a suit that had not one wrinkle or crease, and her skin was a dark mocha color." Smith's appearance was _____ in every detail.
11. "My senses heightened. Our breathing was heavy and loud in the dark trunk. It smelled of gas. There were muted shouts and more gunshots as the vehicle pulled away." I felt _____, not knowing where I was or what was happening.
12. "What's going on, Smith?" he asked while looking at the older man. Smith turned the screen of his phone so Brody could see. Aaron stayed where he was and watched me. I had no idea what he was looking at, but it didn't look good." I was caught using _____ to accomplish my goal.
13. "He spit the words at me. 'You killed my father. You framed him. You made him look crazy.'" Aaron's tone was _____, showing his intent to hurt me for what I had done.
14. "My mother is a heartless bitch. Even I know that," Isi said with a(n) _____ grin, clearly intending to hurt me with her cruel words.
15. "We have a Plan B. That was what I was told going into this, warning what would happen if I failed or refused to follow through." The Agency always had a _____ plan in case something went wrong.

Answer Key (For Teachers)

1. ethereal
2. stratagem / subterfuge
3. redemptive
4. pragmatic
5. stratagem
6. vindictive
7. ambiguous
8. narcissistic
9. scrutinize
10. impeccable
11. disoriented
12. subterfuge
13. menacing
14. malicious
15. contingency

Extension Questions

1. How does the author use vocabulary to help develop the character of Meda's mother throughout the novel?
2. Choose three vocabulary words from this activity and explain how they connect to major themes in the novel.
3. Which vocabulary word do you think best captures the essence of the novel's title, "Stratagem"? Explain your reasoning using evidence from the text.

Literary Analysis Essay Prompts

Character Analysis Prompts

1. **Character Evolution:** Analyze how Meda evolves from a passive participant to an active decision-maker throughout the novel. What key moments catalyze her transformation, and how does this evolution reflect the novel's themes?
2. **Complex Relationships:** Analyze the relationship between Brody and Aaron. How do their different backgrounds and personalities create tension yet allow them to work together? What does their friendship reveal about loyalty and forgiveness?
3. **Antagonist Study:** Examine Meda's mother (Ava) as an antagonist. Is she a straightforward villain, or does the author create complexity in her character? How does her relationship with Meda complicate traditional hero-villain dynamics?
4. **Secondary Character Impact:** Analyze Dan's role in the novel. Though he appears in fewer scenes than other characters, how does his presence—and later his absence—impact the story and other characters' development?

Thematic Analysis Prompts

5. **Identity Theme:** Analyze how *Stratagem* explores the theme of identity. How does Meda's ability to physically change her appearance serve as a metaphor for broader questions about who we really are?
6. **Trust and Betrayal:** Examine how the novel develops the themes of trust and betrayal. How do characters decide whom to trust, and what consequences result from these decisions?
7. **Family Bonds:** Analyze how different types of families (biological, chosen, and constructed) are portrayed in the novel. What statement does the author make about what constitutes a "real" family?
8. **Power and Control:** Explore how power dynamics operate throughout the novel. Who holds power over whom, how is this power exercised, and how do characters resist or subvert control?

Literary Analysis Essay Prompts

Literary Element Analysis Prompts

9. **Setting as Character:** Analyze how settings in the novel (the bunker, the hotel, the White House) function almost as characters themselves. How do these environments shape events and reflect thematic elements?
10. **Symbolism:** Examine the use of symbolism in *Stratagem*. Focus on recurring symbols (Meda's earrings, silver, disguises) and analyze how they contribute to the novel's meaning.
11. **Structure and Pacing:** Analyze how the novel's structure—including chapter breaks, scene transitions, and pacing—contributes to suspense and emotional impact. How do structural choices reflect Meda's emotional journey?
12. **First-Person Perspective:** Analyze how the first-person narration affects our understanding of events and characters. What are the limitations and advantages of experiencing the story exclusively through Meda's perspective?

Comparative Analysis Prompts

13. **Literary Traditions:** Analyze how *Stratagem* incorporates and reimagines elements from spy novels, coming-of-age stories, and science fiction. How does this blending of genres contribute to the novel's unique impact?
14. **Character Comparison:** Compare and contrast Meda and Isi as mimics. How do their different upbringings and choices highlight the novel's themes about nature versus nurture?
15. **Agency Versus Opposition:** Compare the Agency and the Opposition as organizations. Are they fundamentally different, or do they share concerning similarities? What statement does the novel make about institutions and power?

Thesis Statement Practice Activities

Activity 1: Thesis Statement Components

Instructions: Below are components of effective thesis statements for literary analysis. Review each component and then practice creating thesis statements that incorporate all elements.

An effective literary analysis thesis statement:

1. Makes an arguable claim about the text
2. Focuses on specific literary elements or techniques
3. Connects to broader themes or significance
4. Is specific and focused rather than general
5. Uses precise language

Example: In *Stratagem*, Christina Hagmann uses Meda's physical transformation ability as a powerful metaphor for teenage identity formation, revealing how external pressures often force young people to hide their authentic selves.

Practice: For each prompt below, identify which components are missing and revise to create a complete thesis statement:

1. *Stratagem* shows that family is important.
2. The setting of the White House is significant to the plot.
3. Christina Hagmann uses symbolism throughout the novel.
4. Meda's relationship with Brody demonstrates character development.
5. The novel criticizes government organizations.

Activity 2: Thesis Statement Development

Instructions: For each literary element below, develop a thesis statement that analyzes how Hagmann uses this element to develop a specific theme in *Stratagem*.

1. **Character:** How does Meda's character development connect to the theme of identity?
2. **Setting:** How do the various settings connect to the theme of freedom versus control?
3. **Symbolism:** How does symbolism (choose specific symbols) connect to the theme of authenticity?
4. **Point of View:** How does the first-person perspective connect to the theme of trust?
5. **Conflict:** How do the novel's conflicts connect to the theme of loyalty?

Example Response for #1: Through Meda's gradual transformation from obedient asset to autonomous individual, Hagmann illustrates how identity formation requires both rejecting external control and embracing personal responsibility for one's choices.

Thesis Statement Practice Activities

Activity 3: From Question to Thesis

Instructions: Convert each analytical question into a specific, arguable thesis statement.

1. How does Meda's relationship with her mother affect her decisions?
2. Why is the setting of the White House important for the climax?
3. What role does Dan play in the overall narrative?
4. How do Meda's shifting abilities represent her internal struggles?
5. What is the significance of Meda's earrings throughout the novel?

Example Response for #1: Meda's complicated relationship with her mother serves as the primary catalyst for her moral awakening, as her mother's betrayal forces Meda to define her identity through her own choices rather than through biological connection or agency manipulation.

Activity 4: Counterargument Integration

Instructions: For each thesis statement below, develop a counterargument and then revise the thesis to acknowledge and refute this opposing view.

1. **Initial Thesis:** In *Stratagem*, Brody represents moral purity while Aaron embodies vengeful rage.
2. **Initial Thesis:** The Opposition is portrayed as morally superior to the Agency throughout the novel.
3. **Initial Thesis:** Meda's decision to kill her mother represents her complete moral transformation.
4. **Initial Thesis:** The novel suggests that biological family bonds are ultimately less important than chosen relationships.
5. **Initial Thesis:** Meda's shifting ability is portrayed entirely as a burden rather than a gift.

Example Response for #1:

- **Counterargument:** Both characters show moral complexity beyond these simple categorizations.
- **Revised Thesis:** While Brody initially appears to represent moral purity in contrast to Aaron's vengeful rage, Hagmann ultimately reveals both characters' moral complexity, suggesting that true ethical strength comes from acknowledging one's darker impulses while choosing compassion despite personal pain.

Thesis Statement Practice Activities

Activity 5: Thesis Statement Peer Review

Instructions: Write a thesis statement responding to one of the literary analysis prompts above. Exchange with a partner and evaluate each other's thesis statements using the following criteria:

1. **Specificity:** Does the thesis make a specific claim about the text rather than a general observation?
2. **Arguability:** Is this a claim that someone could reasonably disagree with?
3. **Focus:** Does the thesis identify specific literary elements or techniques to analyze?
4. **Significance:** Does the thesis connect to broader themes or meaning?
5. **Clarity:** Is the thesis stated clearly and precisely?

Revision Guidelines: After receiving feedback, revise your thesis statement to address any weaknesses identified by your peer reviewer.

Thesis Statement Practice Activities

Activity 6: Thesis to Outline

Instructions: Select your strongest thesis statement and develop a basic outline that shows how you would structure an essay supporting this thesis.

Your outline should include:

1. Introduction (including thesis)
2. 3-4 main points that support your thesis
3. Specific textual evidence you would use for each point
4. A conclusion that extends your analysis to broader significance

Example:

Thesis: Through the parallel journeys of Meda and Isi, Hagmann challenges the nature versus nurture binary, suggesting that while circumstances shape our options, moral identity ultimately emerges from the choices we make within those constraints.

Outline: I. Introduction

- Context about moral choices in young adult literature
- Introduction of Meda and Isi as mimics with different paths
- Thesis statement

II. Similar backgrounds but different circumstances

- Both are mimics controlled by the Agency
- Contrast: Meda had a loving family first; Isi did not
- Evidence: Meda's memories of her father vs. Isi's attachment to Ava

III. Parallel moral tests

- Meda refuses to kill; Isi embraces assassination
- Both are tested in their loyalty to maternal figures
- Evidence: Meda's resistance to Agency vs. Isi's eventual betrayal of Ava

IV. Culminating moral choices

- Meda's decision to kill her mother to save Isi
- Isi's decision to help Meda escape
- Evidence: White House confrontation scene

V. Conclusion

- How both characters transcend their "programming"
- Broader implications for understanding moral development
- Connection to readers' own moral agency

A Note from the Author

Dear Fellow Educators,

Thank you for sharing *Stratagem* with your students. This story about Meda's journey toward self-discovery and agency grew from my desire to create a character who must navigate complex moral choices while discovering who she truly is—something our students face daily, though perhaps with less dramatic stakes!

I've found this novel works well with middle school through high school, particularly in exploring themes of identity, moral responsibility, and the courage to make difficult choices. Consider using these discussion prompts:

- How does Meda's ability to change her appearance serve as a metaphor for teenage identity development?
- Examine the various "prisons" (literal and figurative) Meda encounters. What does each reveal about her character?
- Track Meda's growth from following orders to making her own choices. What key moments mark this transformation?

For writing activities, students might enjoy:

- Creating a character sketch from another perspective (Brody, Aaron, or Isi)
- Writing "missing scenes" that explore Meda's thoughts between chapters
- Crafting an epilogue that imagines Meda's future

I'd love to hear how you've used *Stratagem* in your classroom! Please reach out at christinahagmannauthor@gmail.com. Feel free to encourage your students to reach out as well. The greatest reward of being both an author and teacher is witnessing students connect with stories that challenge them to think deeply about who they are and who they want to become.

Happy teaching and reading!

Christina Hagmann

PS Always remember to read and write dangerously!

Go to christinahagmann.com for updates on more teaching units.