

ALDRICH AMES Traitor

It came to a sudden end on February 21, 1994. Aldrich Ames left his home that morning, telling his wife he would be back shortly. He climbed into his wine-red XJ6 Jaguar and headed for CIA headquarters. But he didn't get very far. At a stop sign a few blocks from his house, Ames ran into an FBI roadblock. Several cars with red lights flashing surrounded him. America's most destructive traitor was under arrest.

² The arrest of Aldrich Ames had been a long time coming. For 10 years he had betrayed his own country—the United States. Ames worked for the federal government's Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA spies on the country's enemies. At the same time, it tries to prevent these enemies from spying on us. People who work for the CIA often have access to America's most closely held secrets.

³ Ames sold out the United States to the former Soviet Union. He did it for the money—lots of money. Starting in 1985, the Soviets paid Ames \$4.6 million for his treason. In return, Ames gave them what they wanted. He told them about America's top secret plans. No American had ever given an enemy so much. Ames also betrayed his fellow CIA workers. The CIA had recruited some Soviets to work as spies for the United States. Ames gave their names to the Soviets, who moved quickly to arrest them. At least 10 of them were then tried, found guilty, and executed. About two dozen more were thrown into Soviet prisons.

⁴ Ironically, Aldrich Ames himself had never been a good spy. He had done spy work for a while but, although he was bright, his bosses gave him a series of dismal reports. He didn't win any points, for example, when he once left a safe open. The safe held many secrets as well as the combinations to other safes. Ames was also a heavy drinker. Once, while on duty in Italy, the police found him passed out drunk in a street gutter. Surprisingly, he was not fired. Instead, the CIA moved him to a desk job. He was put in charge of Soviet counterintelligence. Imagine, Ames was given the job of trying to stop the Soviets from spying on us!

⁵ Everyone now agrees that Ames should have been caught sooner. CIA officials knew he had problems. But for years they just looked the other way. They couldn't believe that one of their own would turn on them. But Ames did. His treason began on June 13, 1985. On that day, he took several plastic bags crammed with secrets and gave them to a Soviet agent named Chuvakhin. Never in U.S. history have so many classified files been given away in one day. And Ames didn't stop there. Over the next 12 months, he met with the Soviet agent at least 14 more times to leak secrets.

⁶ During that time, CIA agents working in the Soviet Union began to vanish. More and more were picked up, arrested, and shot. Ames had secretly given their names to the Soviets but at the time no one knew that. Americans couldn't figure out how the Soviets were uncovering the spies. Had the spies all made some mistake and gotten caught? Had the Soviets somehow tapped CIA phones? Had the Soviets broken a CIA code? Or did the enemy have a "mole"—a spy—inside the CIA? No one knew. But clearly something was

wrong. The odds were against the CIA losing that many spies that fast without something being rotten.

⁷ Meanwhile, Aldrich Ames seemed to have plenty of money. His salary when he started working for the CIA was only about \$50,000. Yet he was now driving an expensive Jaguar. He purchased an opulent house for \$540,000 and paid for it with cash. (Most people, of course, need to get a loan from a bank to buy a house.) Ames bought rare paintings and pricey jewelry. He even opened up a Swiss bank account. In the past, he had worn rather shabby clothes but now he sported the latest fashions. Still, no one at the CIA seemed to notice or care.

⁸ Ames, who was divorced, remarried in 1985. His new wife was from Colombia. Her name was Maria del Rosario Casa. When Rosario found out what Ames was doing, she joined him. The two became partners in crime. She turned out to be just as greedy as he was. In fact, she might have been the stronger of the two. A former friend later said, "Rosario was the dominant figure. She led the way and [Ames] went along."

⁹ The CIA did not want to face the possibility that they might have a mole. However, none of their other ideas checked out. So, eventually, CIA officials had to look inside their own organization. Who could be selling secrets to the enemy? They started with a long list of suspects. They looked at anyone who had access to top secrets. It took time, but slowly they crossed off most of the names. The name of Aldrich Ames remained on the ever-dwindling list of suspects.

¹⁰ By 1990, CIA agents began to wonder how Ames could live so well on his pay. When they checked his bank records, one agent noticed that Ames had made a series of large deposits in 1985 and 1986. Soon, Ames was a prime suspect. In 1991, the FBI joined in the hunt. This was the first time the CIA and the FBI formed a joint mole-hunt team. Team agents questioned Ames. His answers were vague and evasive. To nail him, the team needed proof that would hold up in court.

¹¹ Secretly, FBI agents staked out the Ames house. Disguised as lawn workers and tree trimmers, they watched and waited. They bugged Ames's house and his car. They tapped his phones. They put a video camera in a tree across the street. The agents even combed through the trash. But week after week, nothing happened. They were sure they had the right man, but they couldn't prove it.

¹² Then one evening, their efforts paid off. Under the cover of darkness, the agents rolled slowly down the street in a van with its headlights off. They snatched a full trash can from Ames's yard and replaced it with an identical, but empty, trash can. Returning to the van, the agents rifled through the garbage. They discovered a torn note arranging a secret meeting with a Soviet agent. Finally the agents were certain they had the right man. Ames was the mole.

¹³ The agents secured a search warrant, and waited until Ames and Rosario went out of town for a trip. The agents then entered the Ames house and began to look around. One agent downloaded all the files Ames had in his computer. Amazingly, Ames had kept a complete record of his treachery on his home computer. It was all there—the drop sites, the signals, the messages.

¹⁴ Still, the FBI wanted to catch Ames in the act, so they waited. Meanwhile, Aldrich Ames continued to work for the CIA. Every day, he pulled into the parking lot in his fancy Jaguar. He went on regularly scheduled business trips. He even went to Moscow on CIA business, coming back \$125,000 richer.

¹⁵ At last, the agents were tired of waiting. They didn't want to risk losing their man. After all, he might go to Moscow and never return. The order was given: "Bring him in." At the same time that Ames ran into the roadblock, other agents moved in on Rosario. Both were put on trial and found guilty. Rosario was sentenced to five years in prison. On April 28, 1994, Aldrich Ames was sentenced to life in prison with no hope for parole. He had done enough damage for one lifetime.

If you have been timed while reading this article, enter your reading time below. Then turn to the Words-per-Minute Table on and look up your reading speed (words per minute). Enter your reading speed on the graph on.

Reading Time: **Lesson**

_____ : _____

Minutes

Seconds

Name#:

ALDRICH AMES: Traitor

Directions: After reading the passage, circle the correct answer to each question.

1. What is the author's purpose in writing "ALDRICH AMES Traitor"?
 - a. Entertain the reader with a humorous story.
 - b. Encourage the reader to stay informed about current events.
 - c. Reveal details about an important event.

2. From the statements below, choose the ones that you believe the author would agree with. There may be more than one answer.
 - a. When CIA employees left work for the day, no one searched what they were taking out.
 - b. Only CIA employees with perfect records could be put in charge of important projects.
 - c. When they fear that a mole is at work, CIA agents quickly arrest any possible suspects.
 - d. The FBI is so important that its agents don't need a search warrant to search a private citizen's home.

3. In which paragraphs did you find your information or details to prove or disprove each possible option to answer question 2?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

4. In this passage the topic the author discusses is
 - a. Ames had more money than the average CIA agent.
 - b. Ames knew all of the CIA's secrets.
 - c. When a traitor is suspected, chaos ensues.
 - d. Ames was a man who sold out his country for profit.

5. The main idea the author wants the reader to understand is
 - a. Certainly Aldrich Ames is one of the most infamous traitors in the history of the United States.
 - b. For 10 years, Aldrich Ames leaked CIA information to America's enemies, but he was eventually captured and imprisoned for his treason.
 - c. With the money he made from selling U.S. government secrets to the Soviet Union, Aldrich Ames was able to go on a 10-year shopping spree.
 - d. Aldrich Ames' treacherous actions towards the United States began on June 13, 1985 and came to a sudden halt on February 21, 1994.

6. Label the following statements as a supporting detail [SD] to the main idea, or irrelevant [I] to the main idea.
- _____ a. Ironically, Aldrich Ames himself had never been a good spy.
 - _____ b. America's most destructive traitor was under arrest.
 - _____ c. So, eventually, CIA officials had to look inside their own organization.
 - _____ d. Soon, Ames was a prime suspect.
 - _____ e. On April 28, 1994 Aldrich Ames was sentenced to life in prison with no hope for parole.
 - _____ f. Ames had secretly given their names to the Soviets but at the time no one knew that.
 - _____ g. The odds were against the CIA losing that many spies that fast without something being rotten.
 - _____ h. Rosario was sentenced to five years in prison.
 - _____ i. It was all there—the drop sites, the signals, the messages.

Using Words Precisely

Each numbered sentence below contains an underlined word or phrase from the article. Following the sentence are three definitions. One definition is closest to the meaning of the underlined word. One definition is opposite or nearly opposite. Label those two definitions using the following key. Do not label the remaining definition.

C—Closest

O—Opposite or Nearly Opposite

1. He had done spy work for a while but, although he was bright, his bosses gave him a series of dismal reports.
 - _____ a. dreadful
 - _____ b. interesting
 - _____ c. glowing

2. Never in U.S. history have so many classified files been given away in one day.
 - _____ a. available to everyone
 - _____ b. restricted to a few people
 - _____ c. personal

3. He purchased an opulent house for \$540,000 and paid for it with cash.
 - _____ a. brick
 - _____ b. showy
 - _____ c. simple

4. His answers were vague and evasive.
 - _____ a. exact
 - _____ b. historic
 - _____ c. unclear

5. His answers were vague and evasive.
 - _____ a. expensive
 - _____ b. intended to cover up or conceal
 - _____ c. direct and to-the-point