



Camp X

Just east of Toronto, Ontario, is a small town that had a big secret during World War II. Whitby, located on the shores of Lake Ontario, was home to Camp X, a training school for spies from Canada, Britain, and other countries fighting on the side of the Allied forces during the war.

While the conflict raged in Europe, the camp was top secret, since enemy spies would have loved to destroy it. But after World War II ended in 1945, people around the world uncovered the incredible story of Camp X.

“Intrepid”

The founder of Camp X was a businessman, inventor, and spy named William Stephenson. First, he set up a spy network in New York. The network’s telegraph address was “Intrepid” (which means “bold and courageous”) and that became Stephenson’s code name.

Intrepid then set up Camp X on the site of an old farm. Hundreds of men and women trained at the camp, including Ian Fleming, who wrote the series of books about James Bond. Some people claim Fleming based Bond on Stephenson! Intrepid was one of the most famous spies of World War II. People say Intrepid was one of the most important people fighting for the Allies in World War II. He accomplished so much—yet had only a Grade 6 education.

Parachutes, Sabotage, and Disguises

At Camp X, spies were taught how to decipher (or break) enemy codes, forge (create fake) documents (it could cause confusion for the enemy), as well as sabotage experiments the German were conducting on atomic power. They learned how to shoot guns and explode bombs, kill enemies silently, and parachute jump. Radio operators were also trained here.

Spies had to be very fit, so they were constantly exercising and training. They also learned to survive with little food, read maps, create disguises, write secret messages, and do all the other things they would need to do in their dangerous work.

At Camp X, Stephenson also helped maintain a complex telecommunications centre called Hydra. It was located at Camp X because it was safe to code and decode messages there, far from the listening ears of enemy radio operators.

Camp X Today

Now you can visit a park where Camp X stood. You will see the craters where spies were trained to use explosives. You can also see the pathway used by the guards as they patrolled the camp and kept its secrets safe from prying eyes. You can also visit a monument dedicated to the brave men and women who trained and worked there.

Nearby is a museum about the spy school. There, you will see forged money from various European countries, a comb with a hidden compass, a suitcase radio, and much more.



“Camp X”—Think About It

1. Why was it so important that Camp X remain a secret during the war? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

2. Why do you think the author mentioned that William Stephenson only had a Grade 6 education?

3. Look at the subheading Parachutes, Sabotage, and Disguises. How does this subheading make you feel about being a spy? If this subheading were placed on a poster advertising a spy job, would it convince you to try to become a spy?

4. List some words that can be used to describe spies.

5. William “Intrepid” Stephenson maintained Hydra, a sophisticated telecommunications centre. Why else do you think some people think he was so important?

6. How is Camp X today different from how it was during World War II?
