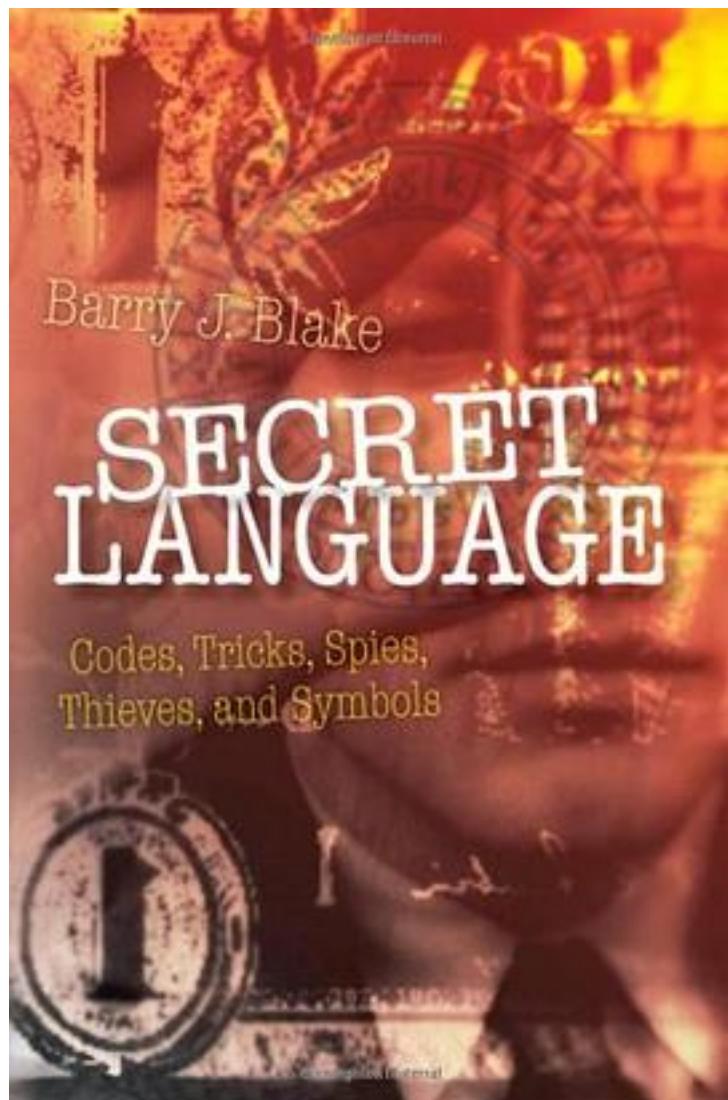


Secret Language



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This book is about language designed to mean what it does not seem to mean. Ciphers and codes conceal messages and protect secrets. Symbol and magic hide meanings to imperil or delight. Languages made to baffle and confuse let insiders talk openly without being understood by those beyond the circle. Barry Blake looks in depth at these and many more. He explores the history and uses of the slangs and argots of schools and trades. He traces the histories of centuries-old cants such as those used by sailors and criminals, among them polari, the mix of Italian, Yiddish, and slang spoken once among strolling players and circus folk and then taken up by groups in London. He examines the sacred languages of ancient cults and religions, uncovers the workings of onomancy, spells, and gematria, considers the obliqueness of allusion and parody, and celebrates the absurdities of euphemism and jargon. Secret Language takes the reader on fascinating excursions down obscure byways of language, ranging across time and culture. With revelations on every page it will entertain everyone with an urge to know more about the most arcane and curious uses of language.

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