



ASHA and BAZ

Meet Elizebeth Friedman



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ASHA and BAZ

Meet Elizebeth Friedman

(Book 3)



By Caroline Fernandez



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CHAPTER 1

THE CODEBREAKER CHALLENGE

“**H**ow do you write a secret message without using invisible ink?” Ms. Wilson giggled as she asked the class. Everyone looked around at each other. When their teacher laughed that way, it meant she was up to something fun.

“Does this have anything to do with a class challenge?” asked Asha. She was the most curious kid in the grade.

“Yes!” exclaimed a thrilled Ms. Wilson. “It’s the Codebreaker Challenge!”

“Chal-lenge, chal-lenge, chal-lenge,” the class chanted.

“Pick a partner and get into teams,” directed Ms. Wilson.

Everyone settled into their teams. Asha and Baz picked each other, as always. They were best friends.

“So, how do you write a secret message without using invisible ink?” asked Ms. Wilson.

Hands shot up around the class. Ms. Wilson pointed to each person, giving them a chance to speak.

“Use a picture instead of writing a word,” suggested a girl.

“Write the message in a different language,” said a boy.

“Use numbers instead of letters,” Baz whispered to Asha.

“Baz says,” Asha said, “use numbers instead of letters.”

Baz sunk down in his seat.

“Thank you, team Asha and Baz,” replied Ms. Wilson. Baz was grateful she didn’t force him to speak up for himself.

“I think you will like this challenge,” said Ms. Wilson. “It’s about secret codes and codebreaking.”

Ms. Wilson walked to the front of the class. She began writing on the blackboard.

CODEBREAKING: science, history, engineering, math, AND solving puzzles

- **Replace letters with numbers**
- **Replace letters with symbols or pictures**
- **Use different languages or alphabets**
- **Replace numbers and letters with dots and dashes**

“Secret codes are so much fun,” said their teacher. “Long ago, kings and rulers sent messages written in secret code. That way, no one could steal their messages,” Ms. Wilson explained. “We still use secret codes today. Can anyone think of a secret code?”

Hands shot up all around the class.

“My computer password,” said Asha.

“Barcodes on cereal boxes,” suggested a boy.

“My mom’s four-number secret code for her bank card,” suggested a girl.

“I LOVE this brainstorming!” replied Ms. Wilson. “You are all correct.”

The class cheered.

Ms. Wilson took a stack of worksheets from her desk and started handing them out to the students.

“The team that solves the Codebreaker Challenge gets a reward,” announced Ms. Wilson.

“A reward! What is it?” asked a girl.

“You have to crack the code to find out. It’s hidden in the secret message,” replied Ms. Wilson. “Read the instructions.”

Baz tapped Asha’s arm. She bounced up and down in her chair.

“A reward,” Asha whispered in his ear.

“We have to win this,” replied Baz.



The class fell silent as they read the instructions.

The Codebreaker Challenge

Instructions: Solve the letter/number key below to decode the secret message.

				5					10			
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M

	15					20					25	
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

$\overline{3} \quad \overline{15} \quad \overline{4} \quad \overline{5} \quad \overline{2} \quad \overline{18} \quad \overline{5} \quad \overline{1} \quad \overline{11} \quad \overline{5} \quad \overline{18} \quad \overline{19}$
 $\overline{7} \quad \overline{5} \quad \overline{20} \quad \overline{5} \quad \overline{24} \quad \overline{20} \quad \overline{18} \quad \overline{1} \quad \overline{20} \quad \overline{9} \quad \overline{13} \quad \overline{5}$
 $\overline{1} \quad \overline{20} \quad \overline{18} \quad \overline{5} \quad \overline{3} \quad \overline{5} \quad \overline{19} \quad \overline{19}$

“It looks like math,” Asha whispered to Baz.
 “No,” said Baz, looking at the worksheet.
 “There are no addition, subtraction, or other

math symbols.” He read the instructions out loud. “Solve the letter/number key below to decode the secret message. We have to figure out how the numbers and letters work together. See how some of the letters already have a number?” he said as he pointed to the page.

“5, 10, 15, 20, 25,” Asha read out loud.

Ms. Wilson walked up and down the rows of desks. “You need to find the *key* to unlock the code,” she hinted. She clapped her hands together with excitement. “Now that you’ve had a look at the challenge, get ready for recess. When you come back, you can jump in to puzzle-solving.”

Everyone in the class stood up and walked toward the door. Asha pulled Baz to the side and whispered in his ear, “I’ll get the magic stick. You bring the worksheet, OK?” Baz doubled back to his desk to get the worksheet. Meanwhile, Asha went over to her backpack and took out a strange-looking stick.

At that moment, the recess bell rang out.

The kids walked down the hall and out the back door to the schoolyard. Once outside, Asha and Baz broke into a run. Asha carried the magic stick, and Baz clutched the worksheet.

They raced down the hill and past the soccer field. They ran to where the grass turned into sand. That's where they stopped.

Asha looked over at the worksheet. "OK, so we need to crack the code," she said. "This time you use the magic stick." She held out the stick to her friend.

Baz took a step back and looked at her with worry. "No, no, no. I don't want to be the one in charge of the stick," he protested.

They had found it in the schoolyard. It was not the regular kind of stick one would find lying around a playground. No, this did not fall off a tree. Someone had created this tool. It was a dark brown color at its base that flowed into a honey color at its tip. And it had a strange bend in the middle. Asha and Baz were both drawn to this stick. . .for this was a magic stick.

"It won't hurt you," said Asha. She held the magic stick out for Baz to take.

He bit his bottom lip and shook his head. He held up the worksheet instead. "No, Asha," he said. "I don't want to hold the magic stick. I'll hold the worksheet."

"Are you sure? It's OK if you want to have a turn with it," said Asha.

“I’m sure,” Baz replied.

Asha knew Baz was a worrier. On the other hand, she was fearless. “I understand,” she said.

“Can I see the worksheet, please?” she asked.

Baz held out the paper. They looked at it together.

“Ms. Wilson said we have to find the *key* to unlock the code,” said Asha. “It’s a hint!”

Asha bent down. Using the magic stick as a pencil, she wrote the secret message in the sand.

3 15 4 5 2 18 5 1 11 5 18 19

7 5 20 5 24 20 18 1 20 9 13 5

1 20 18 5 3 5 19 19

“Step in,” Asha invited Baz. Baz stepped into the drawing next to Asha. Next, she pressed the tip of the magic stick to the sand. “Codebreaker,” she yelled. In that exact moment, the south wind blew sand into a gentle tornado around them. Asha and Baz were transported through space and time.

The mini tornado blew away as quickly as it had blown in. Asha and Baz looked around. The playground and school were gone. Instead, they were standing in someone's yard.

"The secret code!" Baz exclaimed, pointing at the ground.

It was magic.

There, in the sand, the numbers were gone, and in their place was a name and a year:

ELIZEBETH FRIEDMAN. 1942.

