⟨ΛGΞNT ΛSHΛ⟩
MISSION SHARK BYTES

SOPHIE DEEN
ILLUSTRATED BY ANJAN SARKAR

COMPUTER CODE JUST GOT DANGEROUS

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SOPHIE DEEN

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These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.

Before You Start:

● As you read through the book it would be helpful to use a group journal to organise and store discussions and responses to the text. The journal can be a place to capture reflections on the plot, characters and themes, as well as how the writer uses language for effect.

● As you read, you may also want to encourage the group to pause to consider words and phrases that may or may not be familiar to them and discuss and clarify their meanings and origins. These might include but will not be limited to **paranoia, chum, chalo** (from the Hindi phrase meaning, 'Let's go!'), **Bluetooth** (named after King Harald Bluetooth (910–85), credited with uniting Denmark and Norway, as Bluetooth technology unifies the telecommunications and computing industries)**, entrepreneur, agility, hologram, probationary, algorithm, authentic, bot** or **surveillance**. Add these to a glossary, following up on new and unfamiliar vocabulary by using photographs and video sources to bring these words to life and support the pupils in using them in context.

● Asha is a coder, and the story draws heavily on her skills as a programmer and hacker. It would be good to seek cross-curricular opportunities for the children to acquire or use programming skills, for example using python or scratch, both of which are freely available (see https://www.python.org/ and https://scratch.mit.edu/), the latter being an object-oriented environment designed for children, and whose use of algorithms, blocks and loops mirrors the programs we see Asha write in the story.

Session 1: Cover, Prologue and Chapters 1–3

● Begin by sharing Anjan Sarkar's cover illustration, and asking children to consider it carefully, reading what messages it might contain about the book they are about to read, and unpicking any connections they may make with other stories they already know. Ask the children to make predictions of what the story could be about and to justify their responses, drawing out any connections they may have made to other stories. Record the children's responses and return to these as you read the book, comparing the children's initial thoughts to how the story actually unfolds.

● Encourage the children to look at the cover in more detail:

— Who do you think this central character could be? What do you think is the relationship between her and the other two 'characters' by her left foot and in the air above her right shoulder — are they friends, sidekicks, enemies? What clues does their body language give?

— Where do you think they are running? What is the tube or tunnel they seem to be in? And what is the cityscape in the background? What else do you notice about the setting?

— What can you say about the layout and appearance of the cover? What about the typeface used for the title *Agent Asha*, with the words enclosed in angle brackets < >? Children may be aware that in coding, different brackets — parentheses ( ), angle brackets < >, square brackets [ ], and curly braces { } — have different functions. What do you understand by the subtitle 'Mission Shark Bytes'? Children might suggest that this is one of many missions Agent Asha has to undertake; and may connect the sharks with those on the cover, but 'bytes' with coding. What do you think is the meaning of the tagline, 'Computer Code Just Got Dangerous'?

- Where and when do you think the story might be set? What leads you to think this? Do you know any other stories from this setting? Does the cover make you want to read the story? Why? Why not?

- Do you recognise the name of the author Sophie Deen or illustrator Anjan Sarkar? Children may have been members of *Code Club*, an initiative Sophie was involved with, or be familiar with *Detective Dot*, one of her previous creations. They may know Anjan's work from the *Level Up!* or *Alien Next Door* series or his other work.

- [The flyleaf features a QR code you may not wish to scan at this time, as it links to elements of the story the children are about to read. Children may, however, read the 'Terms of Use' and consider what clues the tone of these terms gives to the contents of the book they are about to read, and what audience it is targeted at.]

- Read aloud the Prologue of the story (pages 5 to 8). Give the children time and space to reflect on and discuss what they have heard and to consider:

  - What do you think is happening in the prologue you have just heard? Who is the main character and what do you learn about them?

  - What impression do you form of Kim Lau? Does she remind you of other characters you have met in books or films, or maybe in real life, in your own school?

  - How does the opening paragraph affect you as a reader? Do you think it is an effective way to grab your attention and make you want to read on?

  - What is the impact on you as a reader of the use of humour to capture the action we see through Kim's eyes?

  - What do you think Kim has seen, or fears she has seen? What do you predict will happen next?

  - How do Anjan Sarkar's illustrations — and the silhouette of the shark — support your understand of and deepen your response to the events of the story?

  - What do you think is the purpose of this prologue? What do you think will happen to Kim Lau, and what role do you predict she and this scene will play in the story that is to follow?

  - Have you read prologues in other stories? How do they work?

- Share the illustration on page 10 and read aloud the heading of Chapter 1. Encourage the children to look like a detective at the fine details of Asha's bedroom to identify clues to her personality, interests and circumstances.

  - How does this illustration relate to what you have already seen of this story, from the cover and from the Prologue?

  - Is there anything in this illustration that tells you more about Asha and the story you are about to read?

  - What do you think you can say about her interests, her personality, the time and setting of the story?

  - Do any elements of this illustration relate to the cover? How?

- Discuss the chapter heading:

  - What do you think the pattern of dots and dashes under the chapter number indicates? What do you think it might mean? Children might recognise that this is Morse Code; each chapter opens with a string of Morse Code that they can decipher to add to their understanding of the story, using either the crib sheet shown on page 89 or an online translator, as for example at https://morsecode.world/.

  - What do you think is the significance of the date and time provided at the start of the chapter? Children might observe that 'April 14 — 09:45' is the same time and place as the Prologue, so that we are seeing Asha and Kim at the same time, in two different locations. Again, each chapter starts with the time of the action, and it would be worth noting these to secure the children's chronology of the story.

  - Both the decoded Morse messages and the timestamps of each chapter could be recorded in the Reading Journal.

Agent Asha: Mission Shark Bytes Teachers' Notes
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- Read aloud Chapter 1, and give the children time and space to discuss what they have heard, then ask the children to discuss their responses to the text so far. The group can begin to explore their responses to it with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls **'the four basic questions'**. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

  — Tell me … was there anything you liked about this text?

  — Was there anything that you particularly disliked?

  — Was there anything that puzzled you?

  — Were there any patterns … any connections that you noticed?

- As you read on through the story, the children will benefit from regular opportunities to return to these questions and share their personal responses to the key events and character developments as they occur. Build on these opening questions by inviting the children to consider:

  — What do you find out in this chapter about Asha and her situation and personality, her sidekicks Tumble and Drone, and the time and setting of the story?

  — What clues do you get from what Asha is doing and her conversation with Tumble and Drone, as to the story that is about to unfold? What insights into Asha's mind does the jam-sandwich-making algorithm give you? Tumble is a hacked toy and Drone a 'nannybot' that Asha has also managed to alter – what does that tell you about the time and setting of the story? What role do you think Tumble — with his obsessions with social media and Shelly Belly — and Drone — always wanting to keep Asha safe by stopping her from doing what she wants — might play in the story?

  — Do the companies FaceSpace and ShellyInc remind you of real companies that exist, and that the author might be referencing?

  — How, if at all, do you think this chapter relates to the prologue?

- Carry on reading aloud to the end of Chapter 2 (noting the time and Morse message). Again, allow time and space to reflect on what they have read and to discuss:

  — What more do we find out about Asha from seeing her with her family? Do her parents remind you of your own or of other parents you have met in stories or seen in films or on TV? What is Asha's relationship with her sister Anushka like? How does this compare with sibling relationships in your immediate or wider family or friendship groups? How would you describe the atmosphere in the family home?

  — Does your family have a virtual assistant like Siri or Alexa at home? Does the argument over music remind you of what happens in your own home?

  — What do you make of the message Asha receives on her tablet and her attempts to make sense of it by reading it backwards or reading alternate words, and finally solving it as an acrostic? What do you think the message might mean? What should Asha do?

  — How do Anjan Sarkar's illustrations support your understanding of the story and engagement with the characters and setting? Did his view of Asha's tablet over her shoulder help you to decode the acrostic message?

- Finish the session by reading aloud Chapter 3. Allow time and space to reflect, and then discuss:

  — How does the secret message from the library, and its call for help, affect you as a reader? How do you think Asha might feel to be summoned in this way? Would you respond as she does?

  — Are there any moments or details in the text that make you laugh? How has the author tried to use humour and what effect does this have? Does this keep you reading, make you understand Asha better, and make you think her more believable as a character?

- What do you understand by the references to computer terminology, such as HTML and CSS, and the code that Drone displays to calculate the best way to the library? Do you code at home or at school? How would you explain the 'while' 'if', 'else if' and loops to someone who is not a confident programmer? Could you talk your way through the blocks of code?

- Have you ever used or been with someone who used 'satnav' (satellite navigation) to work out their best route? Did it work well? What were the good and bad things about traveling in this way?

- Do you think that Asha will make it to the library on time, and what do you think will happen if she does? Why do you think Asha in particular has been asked to go to the library? What help do you think she might be asked to give?

Session 2: Chapters 4–7

- Continue to read aloud Chapters 4 and 5, in which Asha enters the headquarters of the Children's Spy Agency (CSA); meets Hedy, its Artificial Intelligence leader; and finds out about the threat to the internet and her potential role in saving it. Give the children time and space to reflect on the chapter they have heard, and discuss:

  - How do you think Asha feels as she makes it to the library in the nick of time and penetrates the CSA? How do you know? What do you think her reactions tells you about her personality?

  - What do you learn about the CSA and its interest in Asha from what Hedy says? Do you think they have made an accurate assessment of her character?

  - What do you think makes Asha the *'ideal candidate for the Children's Spy Agency'*? Do you think there are reasons why she might not be a good choice? Why?

  - How does what we learn about shark attacks on the cables that network the internet relate to the prologue? Does Kim Lau's report reflect what you thought was happening in the prologue?

  - How does Shelly Belly's threat to the internet affect you as a reader? How much do you think you rely on the internet in everyday life? What do you think would be the immediate consequences — in the story, but also in real life — if the internet were to stop working?

  - How do Anjan Sarkar's illustrations support your understanding or deepen your engagement with the story? Which images do you think are most effective? Why?

- Before continuing to read Chapters 6 and 7, reflect on the events of the story so far and the character of Asha. Ask the children to complete a **Role on the Wall**: to do this, have a prepared template of Asha onto which the children can record their ideas. Ask the children to write words or phrases sharing what they know about Asha's outward appearance, or other information about her, on the outside of the outline. Then, use these to begin to infer and deduce her internal feelings and characteristics and note these on the inside of the outline.

- To promote a higher level of thinking, ask the children to consider what we know from her speech and the narration and what we have to infer from her body language, gestures and actions. Support the children in making explicit links between the external and internal. For example, how does something Asha does tell us about her personality? Or, how does her personality make a specific action seem most likely?

- Encourage the children to continue to return to the Role on the Wall as you continue to read the story, using a different colour each time to highlight the knowledge they gain each time they read more.

- Now read aloud Chapters 6 and 7, in which Asha finds out more about the attacks; learns about her mission and officially joins the CSA; is given specialist equipment; and finds herself facing her mission. Allow time and space to reflect, discuss and consider:

  - How do Shelly Belly's plans to take over the internet affect you as a reader? Does she remind you of any other

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characters in other stories or films that you know, or in real life? When you read about a fictional character or situation, does it also make you think about the possibility of that situation becoming real?

— How do you think Asha might feel as she learns more about her mission and is officially recruited to the CSA? What do you make of the Code of Conduct she reads on her tablet? How do you think the different Protocols are intended to ensure the success of the CSA's missions? Which do you think are the most important, and which less so? Why?

— In Asha's position would you be willing to accept Mission Shark Bytes? How do you think she might feel to know the fate of society is down to her? What would you say to her to encourage her? You could write a brief **note of advice**, summarising what she has so far achieved, and why you think she can be successful.

— Many spy stories and films feature high-tech equipment: what is the significance, do you think, of the body suit and the three devices that Asha is given by the CSA Department of Gadgets and Stinkbombs? How do you think each might be used in the rest of the story? Can you imagine a situation in which each one could prove useful?

— How do Anjan Sarkar's illustrations, especially of the gadgets, Code of Conduct and manual pages, support your understanding of and response to the story? How would the story be different without the pictures he has provided?

— How do you think Asha might feel when Hedy disappears, the victim of another shark attack, leaving Asha alone with her mission? What do you predict will happen next?

Session 3: Chapters 8–13

● Before reading on, review the time scale of the story from the chapter headings, and the decoded Morse messages.

— How do the coded messages at the beginning of each chapter relate to what you are reading? Why do you think the author has added them to each chapter?

— What does the timeline provided by the timestamps at the start of each chapter add to your engagement with the story? What is the impact on you as a reader of seeing events unfold 'in real time'?

● Then read aloud Chapters 8 and 9, in which Asha sees evidence of Shelly's plot; is picked up by the CSA vehicle — a modified ice-cream van; covers up her absence from home; and makes her way to and into ShellyInc. Give the children time and space to reflect on what they have read, and discuss:

— How do you think Asha must feel to emerge from the library to see evidence of Shelly Belly's plot in the outside world around her?

— What is the impact on you as a reader of Asha being picked up by the ice-cream van? Did the chapter heading make you suspect it was the CSA vehicle?

— Do you think Asha is right to use her technology skills to deceive her parents, making them think she is having a sleepover at a friend's? Is the lie justified because she is doing something important? How do you think her parents might react? What would your parents do under the admittedly unusual circumstances?

● Page 87 offers a light-hearted side-glance at the topic of fake news, with which children may already be familiar, as news literacy is a key component of the computing and PSED curriculum. This could be followed up in related sessions, using resources such as https://www.theguardian.com/newswise and https://literacytrust.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/all-party-parliamentary-group-literacy/fakenews/newsliteracy/.

● Reread the opening of Chapter 9, from page 94, 'Asha looked…', to page 96, '… little booths on either side.' Ask the children to **visualise** the scene in their mind's eye as you are reading aloud, closing their eyes and picturing the scene unfolding as if it were a scene in a film. Read the section aloud two or three times and then ask them to describe to a partner what they pictured. You could give the children simple art materials to depict their visualisation.

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- Following this, ask the children to share what they imagined and to identify key vocabulary or phrases which support their understanding or interpretation. For example, '… greys and browns of London turned into green fields…' or '… something glittering in the distance…' or '… a thousand windows and curved panes of glass…' or '… the ShellySlide which connected the top and bottom floors.' Ask the children why these words or phrases in particular stood out to them.

  — What made them so vivid or memorable?

  — What impression is created by the author through the descriptions?

  — How do these descriptions make you feel?

  — What would you be thinking if you were an onlooker?

- You could also share with children images of the actual headquarters of real-life organisations, such as Apple Park, the Googleplex or the Amazon Spheres.

- What is the impact on you as a reader of Asha's hacking the scanner to get into ShellyInc, and the alarm created by the bug in her code? How do Anjan Sarkar's illustrations, for example the decision-tree on page 97, add to your enjoyment of the story?

- Read aloud Chapters 10 and 11, as Asha, with Tumble and Drone, makes her way through ShellyInc through the ventilation shafts, breaks into the office, and logs on to the computer. Allow time and space to reflect on what they have heard, and discuss:

  — What impression does ShellyInc make on you as we see it through Asha's eyes, as she makes her way unseen around the building? Do you think this is somewhere you would like to work? Why? Why not?

  — What do you think is the significance of the Bluetooth butterfly they see being flown? How do you think this might go on to be important later in the story?

  — How do you think Asha feels as she succeeds in finding the server and logging on to the computer? Did you think she would get this far?

  — Do you practise better password hygiene than Ricardo Kon Carney? Did you learn anything in this chapter about how to create good passwords and keep them safe? You may want to extend this opportunity for cross-curricular learning into a separate computing session.

  — Why do you think Asha struggles to find the file she needs? How do you think she feels when they hear people outside the door? What do you think will happen next?

- Finish the session by reading aloud Chapters 12 and 13, as Asha is discovered by Shelly Belly and Ricardo Kon Carney; pretends to be an employee's child; is unmasked as a data thief; escapes the office with Shelly's USB drive and makes her way down the ShellySlide on to Shelly's helicopter. Allow time and space to reflect on what they have heard, and discuss:

  — How do you think Asha might have felt when she was discovered in the office and had to think on her feet? Did you find her cover story convincing? Why did Shelly Belly and Ricardo Kon carney not ultimately fall for it?

  — How do you react when you see Asha, Tumble and Drone working together to outwit their pursuers and Asha using her gadgets to escape them? How does the author manage to make this exciting and also amusing?

  — Why do you think Asha is so pleased to find herself in danger in the back of the helicopter, on her way to Fishmouth? What do you think is meant by the phrase, *'This was what being a secret agent was all about.'*

  — What have you found out about Asha in these chapters? Update the Role on the Wall as you see her character develop.

  — You could also add a quick **pen portrait** of Shelly Belly and Ricardo Kon Carney to the Reading Journal. A pen portrait is an informal description of a person or a group of people, a character sketch in words. A pen portrait may discuss 'hard' facts, such as age or gender, but it should also focus on 'softer' aspects, such as attitudes and appearance. From the chapters you have read so far information you could include in the pen portrait might be name, location, appearance,

background, likes and dislikes, as well as any other ideas they have expressed and the things the writer has implied.

— Why do you think Shelly Belly and Ricardo Kon Carney are flying to Fishmouth? What do you think will happen here?

— Do you think Asha, Tumble and Drone will remain concealed?

— What do you think will happen next?

Session 4: Chapters 14–17

● Read aloud Chapter 14, in which Asha, Tumble and Drone open Shelly Belly's file and read her plans; Hedy tells her to hand over to another agent; and they make a plan for when they arrive at Fishmouth. Give time and space to reflect on what they have heard, and discuss:

— How do you react to the details of Shelly Belly's Operation Shark Bites?

— How do you think Asha reacts? How do you know?

— Do you think Hedy is right to take Asha off the case after she has retrieved the file?

— How do you think Asha feels about this? Do you think she is right to ignore orders? Why do you think she decides to disobey Hedy's instructions?

● You could again ask the children to **visualise** the trio's arrival in Fishmouth and their meeting with Tyler, focusing on the scene in their mind's eye as you are reading aloud, closing their eyes and picturing the scene unfolding as if it were a scene in a film. Read the section aloud two or three times and then ask them to describe to a partner what they pictured. If you give simple art materials to depict their visualisation, you could compare with Anjan Sarkar's illustration on pages 162 and 163.

● Following this, ask the children to share what they imagined and to identify key vocabulary or phrases which support their understanding or interpretation. For example, '… Candy floss, deckchairs, plastic buckets and spades …' or '… at one end of the beach was a boy in sunglasses. He was standing beside a long wooden jetty which stretched out to the sea…' Ask the children why these words or phrases in particular stood out to them.

— What made them so vivid or memorable?

— What impression is created by the author through the descriptions?

— How do these descriptions make you feel?

— What would you be thinking if you were an onlooker?

● Read aloud Chapters 15, 16, and 17, in which Asha is joined by fellow CSA agent Tyler and they set out together to foil the next shark attack. Allow time to reflect on what they have read, and discuss:

— How do you think Asha feels to meet Tyler, knowing that she does not have to fight alone, but also that she needs to lie to have his co-operation?

— What do you think Tyler brings to the team that will help Asha to foil Shelly Belly's plans?

● You could add a brief pen portrait of Tyler to those of Shelly Belly and Ricardo Kon Carney, capturing what makes him an ideal CSA agent. Or explore his character in greater depth by **hot-seating** in role as Tyler so that the children can explore his viewpoint and feelings about what is happening in the story. Give the children time to discuss questions they might ask him beforehand, and to decide on five questions that they would ask him. Invite several children across the group to share what they consider to be their most effective questions.

● In pairs, invite the children to predict possible answers to their questions. Consider which questions listed provoked the deeper responses. Look at the structure of the questions. Is there a pattern to the language used to start the open questions *(Why…)* compared to those that required a single response such as *(What…)*? Ask the children to consider if there is a way we could change the closed questions to encourage Tyler to say more? Model recasting a closed question to an open question. Display this in written form so that the children can refer to this to support their own compositions.

- Now the children have five questions, ask the group to refine these questions together, considering which would elicit the best response from Tyler. Encourage the children to refer back to the displayed question to support their thinking. Then ask the children to choose their three most effective questions to submit to the hot-seating.

- Discuss the contribution of Anjan Sarkar's illustration to the story:

  - How do Anjan Sarkar's illustrations support your understanding of and engagement with the story?

  - Do the hand-drawn plans from Tyler's waterproof notebook on pages 166 to 167, and his shark sketches on pages 170 to 171, add to your enjoyment?

  - What impression does the 'Drone vs Asha' strip on page 175 make on you? How is this different from using words to describe Drone and Asha going head-to-head to find the password until Tumble finds it written down?

- Finish the session by discussing:

  - How does the author convey the excitement of Tyler piloting the boat in pursuit of Shelly and Ricardo?

  - How does it affect them, and you as a reader, when they believe they are pursued by a shark, only to discover it is a robot?

  - What do you think will happen next?

Session 56: Chapters 18–20 and Epilogue

- Read aloud Chapters 18, 19 and 20. Give time and space to reflect on what they have heard, then discuss:

  - How does the drama of confrontation with Shelly Belly and Ricardo Kon Carney affect you as a reader? How does the writer build and sustain the tension?

  - What is the effect on you as a reader of the climactic resolution? How does the author draw everything together in one place?

  - How do you respond to the way the author goes on to end the story? Is this what you predicted?

  - How are you affected by Asha and Tyler's success, by the new friendship of Asha and Tyler, by Hedy's giving Asha a dressing down and keeping her on probation, and by Tyler having to head off for a further mission?

  - How do you think each of the characters feels? How do you know?

- Read the Epilogue, and discuss:

  - What do you think the epilogue means? What will happen next? Do you see Asha undertaking further missions and passing her probation?

  - What is the effect of putting this further episode in a epilogue rather than at the end of the last chapter?

- Revisit Aidan Chambers' four basic questions, giving the children the opportunity to reflect:Did you enjoy this story?

  - What puzzles did it contain?

  - What links do you see to other stories you already know?

After reading, you could also:

- Consider the different characters, the plot and the different settings.

  - Which character was your favourite? Why?

  - Which character, aspect of the story, incident or episode interested the group the most?

  - Did any of the characters remind you of characters in other books?

- Review the story in chronological order and consider the different emotions that Asha has felt throughout the story, the high and low points, using the Role on the Wall to support discussion of her emotional journey.

- You could you use **hot-seating** again to explore the feelings of any of the characters further; in hot-seating one member of the group role-plays a central character from a poem or story and is interviewed by the other children. This activity involves children closely examining a character's motivation and responses.

- The children could work collaboratively to choose words that describe a character's emotions at different points of the story. Write these on post-it notes and then organise them to demonstrate shades of emotional intensity that they have felt in the story and create a **graph of emotion**.

- Through modelling, ask the children to describe their favourite part of the story. Provide the children with an oral scaffold for example: *the most memorable part of the story was… because…*; *my top moment in the story was… because…* and in pairs ask them to identify their favourite part of the narrative. Encourage children to give reasons for their choices and invite some children to share these.

- If possible, leave copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.

- Repeat the visualisation activity used in Sessions 3 (Chapter 9) and 4 (Chapter 15) to explore other settings which are often atmospherically described.

- Use the information from pages 222 to 240 to find out more about the background to the story, including the CSA's AI avatar being named after Hedy Lamarr, who invented the system on which WiFi is based; about Mercator and Galls-Peter projections; about Asha's family tree, and so on.

Other suggested titles:

Books about programming and female coders and STEM icons:
— *Little Leaders: Visionary Women Around the World*, Vashti Harrison
— *Women in Science: 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World*, Rachel Ignotofsky
— *Ada's Ideas: The Story of Ada Lovelace, the World's First Computer Programmer,* Fiona Robinson
— *Hedy Lamarr's Double Life: Hollywood Legend and Brilliant Inventor*, Laurie Wallmark and Katy Wu

Books about coding:
— *Get Coding! Learn HTML, CSS, and JavaScript and Build a Website, App, and Game*, Young Rewired State
— *Get Coding 2! Build Five Computer Games Using HTML and JavaScript*, David Whitney
— *Coding Club: Python Basic*, Chris Roffey

Programming resources:
— scratch: https://scratch.mit.edu/
— python: https://www.python.org/

Watch Sophie Deen, author of *Agent Asha: Mission Shark Bytes*, demonstrate how precise you need to be when coding in this hilarious video! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjxMq8xVlY8

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