

Cryptography in the Americas: Historical Facts

Cryptography · Answer Key · 10 Questions

1. Which early American communication system, used by Indigenous peoples, relied on visual signals and was a form of non-written "cryptography"?

- A) Smoke signals**
- B) Drum beats
- C) Quipu knot records
- D) Painted pictographs

2. During the American Revolutionary War, what cipher was famously used by George Washington's Culper Spy Ring to relay intelligence?

- A) Vigenère cipher
- B) Caesar cipher
- C) Book cipher**
- D) Polybius square

3. The Zimmerman Telegram, a coded message that influenced the United States entering World War I, was sent from Germany to which country?

- A) Mexico**
- B) Canada
- C) Brazil
- D) Argentina

4. What type of cipher, believed to be used by some indigenous groups for record-keeping, involved a system of knotted strings?

- A) Enigma machine
- B) Chappe telegraph
- C) Quipu**
- D) One-time pad

5. During the Mexican-American War, what was a common method of encrypting dispatches used by officers on both sides?

- A) Complex rotor machines
- B) Simple substitution ciphers**
- C) Steganography (hiding messages)
- D) Mechanical key devices

6. The "Playfair cipher" was a significant manual symmetric encryption technique used historically. While not exclusively American, it saw use in contexts related to:

- A) The Civil War espionage**
- B) The development of the internet
- C) The construction of the Panama Canal
- D) Early transcontinental railways

7. What cryptographic concept, involving the concealment of a message's existence rather than its content, was reportedly used by some American settlers to disguise communications during times of conflict?

- A) Transposition cipher
- B) Homophonic substitution
- C) Steganography**
- D) Vigenère tableau

8. During the Cold War, the United States developed advanced cipher machines. Which of these was NOT primarily an American-developed cipher machine?

- A) SIGABA
- B) M-138
- C) Enigma**
- D) XOR cipher

9. The Navajo Code Talkers used their complex language as a basis for an unbreakable code during which major conflict involving American forces?

- A) The War of 1812
- B) The Korean War
- C) World War II**
- D) The Vietnam War

10. In the early 20th century, the United States developed cryptographic systems for its military. The "M-209" was a type of:

- A) Mechanical cipher machine**
- B) Computer algorithm
- C) Quantum encryption device
- D) Human-readable codebook