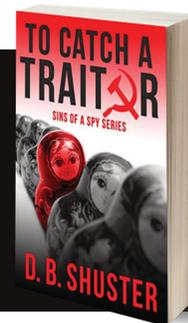


TO CATCH A TRAITOR BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A TRAITOR

- What does it mean to be a traitor?
- Who are the traitors in the book?

MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

The chapters alternate between four narrators—Sofia, Artur, Vera, and Gennady.

- How do their perspectives on the events and people in the story differ?
- To what extent do they each have a claim to truth?

THE ROLES OF WOMEN

The author was inspired by the idea that the roles of women in the Cold War and in the Soviet Jewry Movement had been misrepresented in historical accounts and possibly even in perceptions of the time.

- How do Sofia and her mother contribute to helping the Soviet Jews?
- Can you think of other ways women might have been active participants in these efforts?

The aspects of the story related to Sofia's military espionage are loosely drawn from the true story of Adolf Tolkachev, a scientist who used Tropel mini cameras to photograph documents related to radar technology for the CIA. DB Shuster flipped the spy's gender and set her in Moscow's Jewish Refusenik community.

- How does the character of Sofia deviate from the stereotypes and common literary depictions of spies, especially female ones?

Shuster portrays KGB agent Lilya in the role the KGB traditionally assigned women- the dangle.

- How does Lilya's role as an agent compare to Artur's?
- How different are their assignments in practice?

ANTI-SEMITISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Anti-Semitism is a pervasive phenomenon in the novel.

- How do the characters encounter or express anti-Semitism?
- How do the incidents and expressions of anti-Semitism in the novel compare to recent ones in the United States and other countries?
- How do they compare to discrimination against other racial and ethnic groups?

Historically, the stories of human rights violations against Jews, especially the Refuseniks who were denied permission to emigrate, played a major political role in nuclear disarmament negotiations. The United States pointed to the ongoing oppression of Soviet Jews as a violation of the Helsinki Accords and, on that basis, stalled nuclear disarmament negotiations while at the same time continuing to pursue their own nuclear program. The Soviets saw this strategy as a politically motivated propaganda campaign and as highly hypocritical given the treatment of Blacks in America.

- What is your view of the competing positions, given that the stories of Jewish oppression were true?

KGB agent Artur is deeply shaken when he questions whether he might be the son of Yosef Koslovsky, a Jew.

- What matters more—the answer to the question or the asking of it? Why?



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DB Shuster

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TO HUNT A SPY
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