

REDWOOD

Discussion Questions

BEN MACINTYRE

CROWN

1. Author Ben Macintyre parallels the careers of Vladimir Kuzichkin and Ian McCredie. In what ways are they mirror images of each other? How are they different?
2. Kuzichkin initially joins the KGB out of idealism. At what point do you think he truly stops believing in the Soviet system? Is it one decisive moment or a gradual accumulation of disappointments?
3. Throughout the book, characters repeatedly misinterpret events because ideology shapes what they expect to see. Where do you see confirmation bias affecting decisions on both sides?
4. How much of Kuzichkin's defection stems from politics, and how much comes from deeply personal dissatisfaction? Which motivation feels more convincing?
5. The book portrays espionage as far less glamorous than popular fiction. Which details most challenged your expectations about the life of a spy?
6. Macintyre spends considerable time explaining surveillance, dead drops, coded communications, and other tradecraft. How did understanding these techniques change the way you experienced the story?
7. The relationship between Kuzichkin and Galina is tragic. How did their marriage influence your understanding of his eventual choices?
8. One of the book's recurring ideas is that history can turn on surprisingly ordinary human problems. Why do you think Macintyre chose to foreground Kuzichkin's personal struggles rather than simply portraying him as a heroic defector?
9. The CIA, MI6, and KGB all fail to anticipate the Iranian Revolution despite enormous intelligence resources. What does the book suggest about why intelligence organizations sometimes miss the biggest events? Were the failures caused more by politics, ideology, institutional culture, or something else? Trust is the central currency of espionage. Which relationship in the book required the greatest leap of faith?
10. Macintyre avoids depicting either side as entirely heroic or villainous. Did your sympathies shift as the story progressed? If so, when?
11. If you had been in McCredie's position, would you have trusted Kuzichkin after his initial approach? What evidence would you have needed before taking the risk?
12. How did learning the deeply personal reason behind Kuzichkin's approach to MI6 change your understanding of espionage? Did it make his story more believable, more surprising, or more tragic?
13. Looking back after finishing the book, what do you think *Redwood* is ultimately about: espionage, the Cold War, Iran, friendship, morality, or something else entirely? Which single idea stayed with you the longest?