

Name _____

I Must Betray You Comprehensive Guide

Before You Read:

- ❖ *I Must Betray You* is an example of a historical thriller that is a “crossover” novel—meaning it is intended for teens and adults. What is the definition of a historical thriller? Try to find an example of another historical thriller that is intended for teen and adult readers.

- ❖ Check out this video! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxAX-qQ7ZSM> In this video, author Ruta Sepetys shares some of the strategies she utilizes to craft a story. (Note: She is not talking about OUR story.) What are they? What is her “research process”? And what were some of the key take-aways from this interview?

Historical Background

The story is set in Romania in 1989, during the actual historical events that took place under communist rule. Research and answer the following questions about the Romanian Revolution to help prepare you for your reading of *I Must Betray You*.



The Eastern bloc, famously coined “the Iron Curtain” in Winston Churchill’s 1946 speech, consisted of the USSR’s control over Eastern Europe after World War II. Romania, a Soviet satellite state (an allied independent communist state) was ruled by the brutal dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, until the Romanian Revolution brought his oppressive regime to an end.

1. What happened to the Soviet Union in 1989? Why is 1989 considered the “year of revolutions” for the USSR?
2. Who is Nicolae Ceausescu? Describe his rule in Romania.
3. What happened during the 1989 Romanian Revolution?

Consider using some of these resources to help guide your research:

<https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/fall-of-soviet-union>

<https://www.cato.org/commentary/rise-fall-nicolae-ceausescu-romanian-fuehrer>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50821546>

THEME CHECK-IN

- ❖ What does trust mean to you? How do you build trust with others? Whom do you trust the most in your life? Write a journal response that is 5-8 sentences.

Chapters 1-3:

- ❖ List as many details as you know about Cristian, the protagonist.

Chapters 4-10

- ❖ Describe 4 important people in Cristian's life. Provide one quote (include page number) for each of the characters to show what they are like.

Chapters 11-20

- ❖ Write a short letter to Cristian in response to his experiences in these chapters. Ask important questions. Refer to specific details. Your letter should be about 5-8 sentences.

THEME CHECK-IN

- ❖ *I Must Betray You* highlights controversial topics that people in the U.S. also deal with today, but perhaps in a different way. These include the tension between freedom and censorship and privacy versus surveillance from law enforcement and/or corporate data tracking. What are some of the current issues young adults face that highlight the tension between freedom and censorship? What are some examples that relate to the debate concerning privacy versus surveillance or invasion of privacy?

Chapters 21-22

- ❖ Cristian discovers that people in other countries, like America, live very different lives. How does he discover this, and what are the details of his discovery?
- ❖ What are some common, everyday items and freedoms you have that you sometimes take for granted? What would Cristian be surprised to find out about your life?
- ❖ Cristian Florescu's life in Romania is drastically different than the life of most Orange County teenagers; however, in some ways it is very similar. In what ways is his life very relatable to most teens? In what ways is his world drastically different?

Chapters 23-33

- ❖ Liliana makes a serious accusation about Cristian. What is it? Since we know this is not true, who do you now suspect?

THEME CHECK-IN:

- ❖ The plot of *I Must Betray You* presents a complex moral dilemma that involves blackmail. After being caught in an illegal trafficking exchange, Cristian is told that he must be an informant for the secret police, the Securitate, or be prosecuted. Essentially, this means that he must rat out friends and family. Yet, there is a separate benefit. In serving as an informant, he can help to provide his ailing grandfather, Bunu, with medicine. What are your thoughts on this moral dilemma? Do the ends justify the means? What is the right moral choice in this situation and why? (5-8 sentences)

Chapters 34-45

- ❖ Write a haiku poem describing what is going on in the story during these chapters. A Haiku poem includes imagery (sensory details) and consists of 17 syllables in three lines.
Five syllables
Seven syllables
Five syllables
Be sure that you DO NOT rhyme your poem.

Chapters 46-52

- ❖ Cristian experiences a heavy loss. Write him a letter offering him some kind words during this tough time. Your letter should be 5-8 sentences.

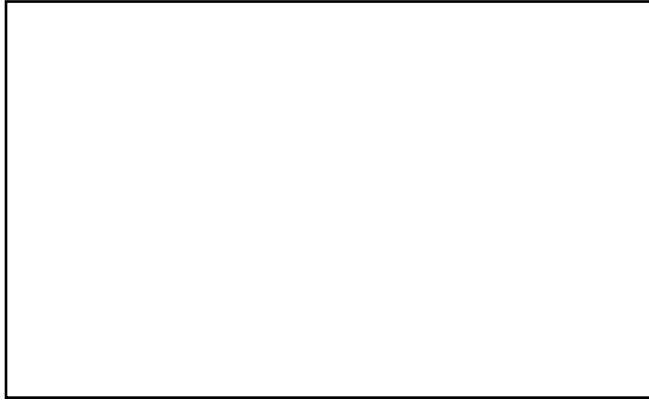
- ❖ Cristian makes a bold move in chapter 51. What does he do? What do you think will happen as a result of this action?

Chapters 53-55

- ❖ Read the Official Report on page 184. What do you think are the “necessary measures” the report refers to? What do you think will happen?

Chapters 56-68

- ❖ Cristian makes an important discovery about his sister. Are you surprised?
- ❖ Cristian and Luca participate in a protest. Create a sign with a message Cristian would have been proud to hold among the protestors.



- ❖ What happens to Luca and Cristian as a result of this protest?

Chapters 69-end

- ❖ *Irony* is a literary device in which a word or event means something different—and often contradictory—to its actual meaning. In Jilava (the jail), the officer snapped at the children and said, “Ungrateful young people. The party gave you a beautiful home and this is how you than them?” (243). Open to the photographs in the back of the book (page 299). What is ironic about the officer’s statement?

- ❖ Cristian feels like the world had forgotten about Romania: “Why was Romania such a dark corner of the map? Was it the distance? Was there a point when the country became too remote to care about?” (245). Label this map with Romania and at least five other countries in order to get a better idea of where the events of this story took place:



- ❖ In Chapter 75, a message “floated and fluttered down from the snow.” Write what that message was in Romanian and English:

A large, empty, wavy-edged rectangular box provided for writing the answer to the question above.

❖ “What was the cost of freedom?” (268). List sacrifices made by three different characters to fight for freedom:

a.

b.

c.

❖ Describe what the radio host read after the capture of the Ceausescu. Why do you think Buna would have loved hearing that?

❖ What are some of the historical facts pertaining to Romania’s Christmas revolution that took place in 1989 in Bucharest? Please cite your source.

❖ Read “A Letter From Romania” on page 278. Using the poem as a template, write your own poem, reflecting on the past two years of your life:

A Letter From _____ (Your Name)

Do you see me?

Searching for _____

Lost within _____

Amidst _____

Do you feel me?

In search of _____

In search of _____

❖ Read the **Epilogue**, and describe what these numbers signify:

d. 20 years =

e. 16 miles =

f. 3,000 pages =

g. 50 people =

h. 1988 =

i. 1989 =

j. F2 =

❖ Look through the photographs at the end of the novel. Which photograph surprised you the most? Which quote did you find most interesting?

POST READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Be prepared to discuss the following questions in class.

❖ The hardest part of living in Romania during this period would be...

❖ My favorite part of the book was...because...

❖ I was sad/upset when...because...

❖ I was surprised when...because..

❖ This book made me want to learn about about...because...