

"THIS TWISTY, DARK MYSTERY HAS IT ALL."

—JUDY BLUNDELL, NATIONAL BOOK AWARD WINNING AUTHOR OF  
*WHAT I SAW AND HOW I LIED*

DANCER

DAUGHTER

TRAITOR

SPY

A NOVEL

ELIZABETH KIEM

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



## TEACHING THE BOOK

A murder mystery, spy thriller, and love story in one, *Dancer, Daughter, Traitor, Spy (DDTS)* illustrates Moscow and New York City in the early 1980s, a period that marked the beginning of the end for the Cold War. The novel's protagonist, Marina Dukovskaya—a 17-year-old ballerina at the famous Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow—finds herself torn between two superpowers when she is forced to flee the Soviet Union and start a new life, incognito, in America.

As a portrait of Moscow under Communist rule and of Brooklyn's Brighton Beach—a neighborhood that still thrives today as an immigrant enclave—*DDTS* affords a glimpse into a past that is both long gone and still with us.

This Educators' Guide presents how *DDTS* can be a useful teaching tool in English, History, and Social Studies classrooms. Discussion topics include: the Cold War, modern police states, Russian history, political asylum, international espionage, domestic surveillance, artistic freedom, national security and civil liberties, classical music, and ballet.



## THE BOOK OVERVIEW

The Soviet Union in 1982 is a society thoroughly indoctrinated in the propaganda of the Communist Party. After three-quarters of a century as the vanguard of international socialism, the Party has lost all power to inspire anything other than eye rolling, particularly among the youth.

In the words of Marina Dukovskaya, Soviet society aspires towards "Communism" but achieves only "Commonism." In the realities of everyday life, most citizens of the Soviet Union share the same superficial lifestyle—one in which food and consumer goods are in short supply; travel abroad is limited; political dissent is rare; economic growth is nonexistent; and individual liberties and privacy are curtailed. The Soviet Union in 1982 came to be defined by a phrase: The Era of Stagnation

But Marina counts herself among the Soviet elite: her mother, Svetlana, is a celebrated ballerina

and an Artist of the people; her father, Viktor, is an administrator in a top-secret Defense Ministry laboratory. But Marina's privileged life is shattered on November 10, 1982. On that day, the Soviet people learn that Leonid Brezhnev, their leader for the past eighteen years, has died. It is the same day Marina, who shares with her mother a level of extrasensory perception, learns that Svetlana has been detained, institutionalized, and branded an Enemy of the People. When Svetlana's fate is confirmed by an agent of the secret police (the KGB), Marina and her father understand that they, too, will be apprehended and perhaps arrested.

Helped by a family friend, Marina and her father escape Moscow and settle in Brighton Beach, New York: home to tens of thousands of Soviet emigrants, victims of state persecution.

In America, Marina struggles with guilt about abandoning her mother and suspicion about her father's role in her mother's disappearance. As she grows more estranged from her father, Marina draws closer to two new friends: a Russian émigré named Benjamin and his American girlfriend, Lindsay. Ben helps Marina gain something of her past life by arranging an audition at Juilliard, a premier ballet school. Lindsay offers Marina insight on American life.

But Marina's past is not far behind her, and she is soon caught in a web of intrigue involving her father, the mafia of Brighton Beach, the KGB, CIA, and FBI. She must suffer more loss before learning an important lesson in trust, duplicity, and human motivations.

# DANCER, DAUGHTER, TRAITOR, SPY AND THE COMMON CORE

Grade Level Equivalent: 9—12

Ages: 14+

Pages: 288

Using this Guide, *DDTS* can be taught in English, History, and Social Studies classrooms in alignment with the Common Core.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS	READING	WRITING	LISTENING & SPEAKING	HISTORY/ SOCIAL STUDIES
GRADE 9	RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.6; RL.9-10.9	W.9-10.1; W.9-10.2; W.9-10.3; W.9-10.7; W.9-10.8; W.9-10.9	SL.9-10.1; SL. 9-10.2; SL. 9-10.3; SL.9-10.4; SL.9-10.5	RH.9-10.1; RH.9-10.2; RH.9-10.6; RH.9-10.8; RH.9-10.9
GRADE 10	RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.6; RL.9-10.9	W.9-10.1; W.9-10.2; W.9-10.3; W.9-10.7; W.9-10.8; W.9-10.9	SL.9-10.1; SL. 9-10.2; SL. 9-10.3; SL.9-10.4; SL.9-10.5	RH.9-10.1; RH.9-10.2; RH.9-10.6; RH.9-10.8; RH.9-10.9
GRADE 11	RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.3; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5, RL.11-12.7; RL.11-12.9	W.11-12.1; W.11-12.2; W.11-12.3; W.11-12.7; W.11-12.8; W.11-12.9	SL.11-12.1; SL. 11-12.2; SL. 11-12.3; SL.11-12.4; SL.11-12.5	RH.11-12.1; RH.11-12.2; RH. 11-12.6; RH.11-12.8; RH.11-12.9
GRADE 12	RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.3; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5, RL.11-12.7; RL.11-12.9	W.11-12.1; W.11-12.2; W.11-12.3; W.11-12.7; W.11-12.8; W.11-12.9	SL.11-12.1; SL. 11-12.2; SL. 11-12.3; SL.11-12.4; SL.11-12.5	RH.11-12.1; RH.11-12.2; RH. 11-12.6; RH.11-12.8; RH.11-12.9



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## EXPLORING THE BOOK THROUGH DISCUSSION, RESEARCH, AND PRESENTATION:

1.

**The setting of *DDTS* establishes the story within the parameters of historical fiction, specifically the Cold War.**

- What was the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) in the 1980s? To prepare for the discussion, read some of the primary and secondary sources listed under “Nonfiction, articles and documents” section of the Resources List.
- Discuss the progression of antagonisms (ideological, actual, and perceived) that determined foreign relations between the US and the USSR. Why was this conflict called the Cold War? What does Marina mean when she says “this war is so cold it exists mostly in space or the hockey arena”?
- Are there similar conflicts today that are antagonistic but non-military, between single nations? Are the players geographical, ideological, or political enemies, or just rivals for global power?
- What does it mean to be at war without troops deployed? Are there other examples of this throughout history?

2.

**During the Cold War the intelligence agencies of the US and the Soviet Union had broad powers to ensure national security.**

- After reviewing sections of *Top Secret America* (see Resources List), organize a debate on the role of the United States’ domestic surveillance programs. On one side, students should argue the case for empowering US intelligence agencies to discover potential threats. On the other side, students should defend the right to privacy of American citizens against invasive spying techniques. Why has this become a subject of national debate in the 21st century? Does the United States fit the definition of a police state when viewed through the lens of domestic surveillance of its citizens? Why or why not?
- Present a selection of contemporary nation-states that can be considered police states. Imagine a scenario for each, in which a young person would need to flee that country and come to the US. Would they be welcomed? Would they be trusted?
- Research the current situation in Russia in regard to civil liberties and human rights through the cases of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Pussy Riot, Alexei Navalny, and Sergei Magnitsky (see “Multimedia” and articles under “Russian dissent today” in Resources List). Is Russia a more or less free society since the fall of the Soviet Union?

3.

The role of the Bolshoi Ballet is key to *DDTS*, not just as a famous ballet academy, but as a national symbol.

- How do you feel about a society in which artists (including writers, actors, dancers, and musicians) are critiqued, awarded, promoted, or demoted by the State rather than by popular opinion? Read a scholarly account about the rise of self-generated fame, like *The Triumph of Reality TV* (see Resources list) and discuss. How do you feel about a society in which artists are selected entirely by popular opinion? How has the Internet and television changed our understanding of fame, celebrity, and talent?
- A wave of high-profile dancers defected from the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. Review the 1974 defection of Mikhail Baryshnikov (see “Multimedia” in Resources list) and discuss how these personal actions affected the Cold War. How would you characterize the decision to defect? Selfish? Heroic? Political? Traitorous? What does the word “defection” mean to you today? Is it different if you are talking about a soldier who abandons his post, a general who trades sides, or a ballerina who fears for her life?
- Make an argument as to whether there are any cultural “crown jewels” in America. What institutions do we, as a nation, take real pride in? Do we have a superior literary canon, architectural tradition, or design innovation? Is Hollywood our Bolshoi? Or Cupertino, home of Apple, Inc.? Or maybe Broadway? Keep in mind, the Bolshoi Ballet is featured in the 100 ruble bill (granted, worth less than \$5)—what cultural institution do we put on our currency?



4.

The events in *DDTS* are revealed by Marina, whose telling of her story is tinged with limited or wrong information, her own emotions, and her gift of “second sight.” She might be considered an unreliable narrator.

- What characteristics make a narrator unreliable? As a reader, do you relate better to stories told in the first person or in the third person? As an exercise, choose a favorite passage from *DDTS* or one of the other “Unreliable Narrator” novels and rewrite it from a different perspective. If it is in first person, rewrite it from the third, or vice versa. How does this change the way the reader receives the story? Is it more or less effective? Why?
- How would you describe Marina’s visions? Are they psychic or psychological? How do these powers compare with other literary psychic characters (see fiction titles in Resources List)? Read one of the fiction titles in the “Unreliable Narrators” section of the Resources List and prepare an analysis of the narrator’s reliability. Discuss the character’s age, intelligence, relationship to other characters, access to information, and finally, motivation.

5. In addition to historical fiction, *DDTS* can be called a spy novel or a murder mystery.

- Spy novels were tremendously popular during the Cold War and as ubiquitous as the dystopian thriller is today. Why do you think fiction and pop culture mirrored current events during the Cold War? How do current events influence popular culture and entertainment today? From the dystopian novels in the fiction Resources List, discuss some examples of plots that reference real world events.
- Read *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* by John le Carré in full or in synopsis. Compare with *DDTS*. What are the elements of a strong mystery? While reading *DDTS*, how many different characters did you suspect in the mystery of Svetlana's disappearance and Viktor's downfall? Why did you suspect them? Write out a case against the person you thought most likely to have committed the crime.
- Present different endings for *DDTS* in which various characters are more (or less) responsible for the outcome than they are as written. Consider the capabilities of Gosha, Sergei, Skilar-sky, and Von Schlieff, for example.



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6. Music, both popular and classical, frames Marina's story.

- Marina's favorite music group, Winged Guitars, is based on one of the earliest and most popular Russian rock bands, DDT. Like all popular culture in the Soviet Union, "official" musical artists had to be approved by the Communist Party. Read some online translations of DDT's songs (See Multimedia in the Resources List) and discuss how the authorities may have reacted to these songs, both in the Soviet Union and in Russia today. (DDT is still making music, but is not nearly as popular as they were thirty years ago.)
- Spend some time listening to popular songs from the 1980s. Do they fit neatly into a genre? Read about the history of punk music in the Multimedia section of Resources List and think about musical genres that represent a movement, versus genres that represent a popular trend. Discuss *DDTS* character Benjamin Frame's theory about "alternative music" and the balance between "pop" and "popular." Punk music, even though it is anti-pop, is still very popular. This prevents it from being neatly labeled "alternative" even while it is "anti-establishment."
- Find a few classic 80s rock anthems that have to do with the Cold War, the Berlin Wall, the fall of Communism, nuclear war, or other topical issues. Does today's popular music reference geopolitical events or ideologies? Check out Scorpions' "Winds of Change" video (in Multimedia section) for inspiration.

## RESOURCES:

### FICTION

#### Espionage Fiction

- *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* – John le Carré, Penguin, 2011.
- *Sweet Tooth* – Ian McEwan and Nan Talese, Knopf, 2012.

#### Unreliable Narrators

- *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* – Agatha Christie, William Morrow, 2011.
- *What I Saw and How I Lied* – Judy Blundell, Scholastic, 2010.
- *Liar* – Justine Larbalestier, Bloomsbury, 2010.
- *In Cold Blood* – Truman Capote, Vintage, 1994.
- *Catcher in the Rye* – J.D. Salinger, Little, Brown & Co, 1991.

#### Psychic Narrators

- *Sisterland* – Curtis Sittenfield, Random House, 2013.
- *The Dead Zone* – Stephen King, Signet, 1980.

#### Dystopian Fiction

- *The Hunger Games* – Suzanne Collins, Scholastic, 2008.
- *Divergent* – Veronica Roth, HarperCollins, 2012.
- *We* – Evgeny Zamyatin, Harper, 1983.

### NONFICTION BOOKS

#### History of the Cold War

- *Lenin's Tomb* – David Remnick, Vintage, 1994.
- *The Cold War* – John Lewis Gaddis, Penguin, 2006.

#### Vladimir Putin

- *Putin's Russia* – Anna Politkovskaya, Holt, 2007.
- *The Man Without a Face* – Masha Gessen, Riverhead, 2013.

#### Cold War ramifications and surveillance

- *Top Secret America* – Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, Little, Brown & Co, 2011.
- *The Whisperers* – Orlando Figes, Picador, 2008.

#### Ballet biographies

- *Beyond the Dance: A Ballerina's Life* – Chan Hon Goh and Cary Fagan, Tundra Books Digital, 2009.
- *Maria Tallchief* – Larry Kaplan and Maria Tallchief, University Press of Florida, 2005.

#### American celebrity

- *The Triumph of Reality TV* – Leigh H. Edwards, Praeger, 2013.

### NONFICTION, ARTICLES, AND DOCUMENTS

#### Cold War primary sources on US/USSR relations

- Ambassador George F. Kennan's "long telegram," digital archival material, 1946.
- Robert Kennedy expresses "outrage" to the Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin during the Cuban Missile Crisis, digital archival material, 1962.
- Soviets report Washington is "engulfed in an atmosphere of war hysteria," digital archival material, 1962.
- Correspondence between Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev, digital archival material, 1977.
- KGB memorandum to disrupt Anti-soviet demonstration in memory of John Lennon, digital archival material, 1980.
- Presidential directive from George Bush, digital archival material, 1989.

#### Cold War analysis

- "Reagan Ought to Get Oscar for Star Wars," Arnold Beichman. *Insight on the News*, September 27, 1993.
  - \* This commentator explains the contributions of Reagan's Star Wars program to the advancement of such electronic technologies as optics, sensors, lasers, and lightweight telescopes.
- "Symposium: Did the Reagan Doctrine Cause the Fall of the Soviet Union?" Margaret Thatcher and Raymond L. Garthoff. *Insight*, January 26, 1998.
  - \* This point/counterpoint format offers opinions crediting Reagan and Gorbachev for enacting policies that caused the former Soviet Union to crumble.



- “The Long Life of Homo Sovieticus,” *The Economist*, December 2011.

#### Soviet Dissidents

- *KGB concerns about dissidents and ideological subversion*, digital archival material, 1969.
- *The US protests arrest of dissident Alexander Ginzburg*, digital archival material, 1977.
- “What Became of the Soviet Dissidents?” Masha and Keith Gessen, *Transit online*, 2002.

#### Russian dissent today

- “Alexei Navalny – The Man Behind the Trial,” Roman Goncharenko. *Deutsche Well*, April 23, 2013.
- Rights in Russia. Archive of news about Russian opposition week by week.

#### Russian émigrés in the US

- “Russia’s Newest Export: Capitalism,” Alex Taylor. *CNN Money*, December 8, 1986.
- “New Wave of Russian Emigration,” Yulia Ponomoreva. *Russia Behind the Headlines*, June 10, 2013.

#### The Bolshoi Ballet

- “Danse Macabre,” David Remnick. *The New Yorker*, March 8, 2013.
- “Bolshoi Ballet was ‘giant brothel’ claims former dancer,” *BBC*, March 20, 2013.

#### American Ballet

- “Storybook Ballerina’s True-Life Adventure,” Helene Stapinski. *New York Times*, November 17, 2011.

#### Dystopian literature

- “It’s the End of the World as We Know It,” Jonathan Liu. *Wired Magazine*, January 25, 2012.

**All digital material can be accessed at [www.sohopress.com/commoncore/2795/](http://www.sohopress.com/commoncore/2795/) or by scanning the QR code below.**



#### MULTIMEDIA

- The State of Ballet in America, video clip and transcript, 2010.
- The Defection of Mikhail Baryshnikov, video news clip and background facts produced by Canadian Broadcasting Company, 1974.
- “More Bolshoi” Elizabeth Kiem, blog posts on DDTs website: [dancerdaughter.com](http://dancerdaughter.com).
- The Prelude to the Cold War PBS produced chronology, maps, and downloadable material outlining division of power after WWII.
- The Cold War and Connections to Current Events *New York Times*-produced educational materials.
- National Security Discovery Education website devoted to lesson plans on American intelligence.
- Glenn Greewald. Articles by the journalist in *The Guardian*.
- Mikhail Khodorkovsky website devoted to most famous political prisoner in Russia today.
- Pussy Riot website devoted to punk protest band, members of which are imprisoned for anti-Putin performances.
  - \* Also: *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*, documentary tells the story of Masha, Nadia, and Katia of the feminist art collective.
- *Putin’s Kiss*, documentary follows Masha, a 24-year-old former leader Putin’s *Nashi* youth movement as she struggles with the unsavory actions of the movement that shaped her early years.
- *My Perestroika*, documentary film, 2010. Award-winning film following five ordinary Russians from their Soviet childhood, through the collapse of the Soviet Union during their teenage years, to the constantly shifting political landscape of post-Soviet Russia.
- DDT song lyrics, website. <http://lyricstranslate.com/en/ddt-lyrics.html>
- The History of Punk Rock, website, Open Culture.
- Winds of Change, music video, The Scorpions.



## AUTHOR'S NOTE:

As much as I like a good spy novel or murder mystery or “holy cow, I think I’m in love” type of story, it is the historical fiction element of *Dancer, Daughter, Traitor, Spy* that was the most fun for me to write.

Every reader has a bygone era (or era still to come) that best captures the imagination. For some, it is Paris in the 20s; for others, the planet Arrakis 25,000 years from now.

For me it is Moscow in the 1980s. Moscow at the end of an era.

I close my eyes and imagine the shabby housing, the basement printing press, the word of mouth concerts of underground music, the monuments to a “glorious future” that no one really expected, the powdery chocolate, the brown bread, the Olympics boycotted by the West, and I feel both at home... and in an exotic land.

Funny, no? To think “stagnation” is exotic.

Anyway. I’ve wanted to capture that world in a novel for a very long time, and the parts of DDTs set in Moscow are as close as I have come so far. I hope it will make you want more. And if it does, I have prepared a short list of my personal favorite supplemental resources.

- *Made in Russia, Unsung Icons of Russian Design* – Michael Idov, ed., Rizzoli, 2011.
  - \* So much cool stuff here! From mobile soda dispensers to Sputnik watches to unbelievably old school recording equipment that you could probably navigate a submarine with. This will definitely send you back in time.
- *Red Plenty* – Francis Spufford, Graywolf Press, 2012.
  - \* A nonfiction writer who is “creeping gradually up on novels,” Spufford captures the Soviet Union in its 1950s golden era in a book that is a fiction/history hybrid. I like everything about that!
  - \* And *Red Plenty*’s awesome website, full of impossibly great gems of mid-century modern Soviet Style. Jokes, movies, cookbooks, computing! I love this website, it’s smart, smart, smart!
- *Master and Margarita* website.
  - \* It goes without saying, I expect you to read the book by Mikhail Bulgakov first. And when you do, you’ll want more! This is the all-time finest fantasy novel ever written (and its main character is Moscow at the height of Stalinism).
- *Vaclav and Lena* – Haley Tanner, Dial Press, 2012.
  - \* The story of two children growing up in Brighton Beach. Though they come from the same world (Russia), it turns out that they are from very different worlds (Vaclav’s mother lives for him; Lena’s mother abandons her) and so they are drawn apart. It is moving, so true to life, and the Coney Island Sideshow makes an appearance. Bonus!
- Bee Flowers’s images of the Moscow Metro. In a word, stunning.
- “Eto vso,” music video, DDT.
  - \* There was a draft of DDTs that just had way, way, way too many lyrics of DDT, the band that is the voice of a generation and the model for Winged Guitars, Marina’s favorite band in the book. Particularly this song, “Eto Vso,” which means “That’s all.” And isn’t it interesting that my title, in acronym, is DDT, plural?
- *Dancer, Daughter, Traitor, Spy* website, [dancerdaughter.com](http://dancerdaughter.com). Here you can find more everything. More Moscow, more Bolshoi, more Brighton, more DDT. (I’m a little obsessive.)

Enjoy.

**NOTES:**

[illegible]This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

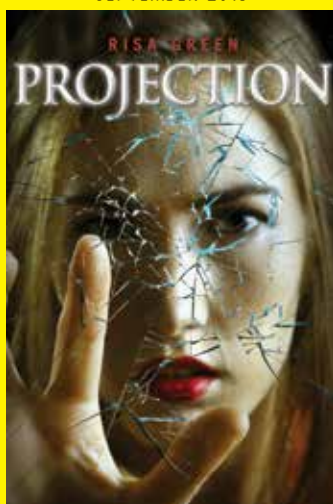
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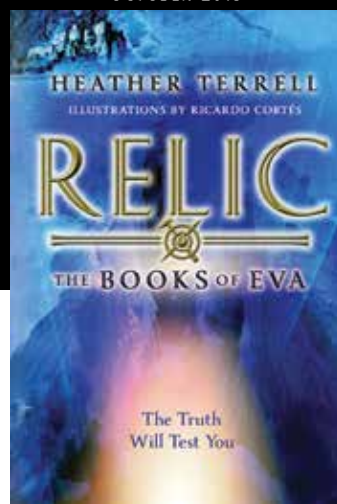
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