



NANCY: What a book! This novel takes the reader back in time to a day when the USA fought the Cold War with literature. A time when well-educated women were relegated to the typing pool and that was success. Espionage, illicit affairs, writers speaking truth to power, aspiring women and controlling men. This contains so much for the artist's soul to ruminate about and upon. Do writers change the course of history? Quite a masterpiece! I loved it.



KATHARINE: A wonderful historical novel. I highly recommend this to history teachers teaching about the era of the Cold War, US-Soviet relations. So important to remember and not let history repeat itself as I fear it may.



PRISCILLA: Where was God in this book? Did any of them go to church? Maybe that would have helped. Certainly if Irina had just married Teddy and Olga left Borya alone they both would have had better lives following the straight and narrow, don't you think?



JANE: The Spy Who Loved me! I wouldn't have minded having Sally's attention, or Irina's for that matter. A great story of passionate love—like Dr. Zhivago — the book that inspired Lara Prescott to write this impressive account of affairs, espionage and art. Hear! Hear! Ladies, we need another adventure on foreign soil, too!



MOLLY: So much pain in this book, but beauty, too. My people know the kind of suffering the women and the writers in this story experienced. I agree with Jane... A very well-written story, showing not only discrimination and evil, but also the value and triumph of love and perseverance in face of adversity.



ABIGAIL: I loved that this book took us deep into the life of Pasternak, an artist/writer, who was so loved by the Russian people. It shows what a totalitarian regime can do to people, seemingly turning them all against their famous poet, but not really. I pray the USA doesn't become like this. I fear it's happening.



SALLIE: I cry for Olga's children. So hard for them. Can you imagine what that was like for her at the end of this book? I see she wrote an autobiography that Prescott used in writing. I'd like to read that and learn more about her. But I felt she was selfish in terms of her children. So hard for them. This was a well-written soon-to-be classic that also lifts up the negative side of affairs from a child's point of view.



Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: The Secrets We Kept

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Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Why symmetry and artistry do you see woven through the stories in this book?
3. This book tells the stories of many women. How were women portrayed? How were they treated? What were their triumphs and failures? Would you say this is a feminist novel? Why or why not?
4. This book includes several love stories. What parallels were there in the love stories? There seems to be considerable pain in the stories. Does this reflect your own experience? Why or why not?
5. Part of this story involves the USA's attempt to use literature to fight the Cold war. Was this successful? How does this related to our current times?
6. Pasternak seemed such a tragic figure as portrayed in this book. What did you think of him, his writing career, his courage and weakness and his work?
7. Have you read Dr. Zhivago? If so, how does it relate to and illuminate the stories in this book?
8. What is the role of art and literature in speaking truth to power? Do modern novels change the world? Do they change you? Why or why not?
9. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

On YouTube: Lara Prescott Talks Banned Books, Love Affairs, and Secret CIA Missions | The Secrets We Kept (6:02)