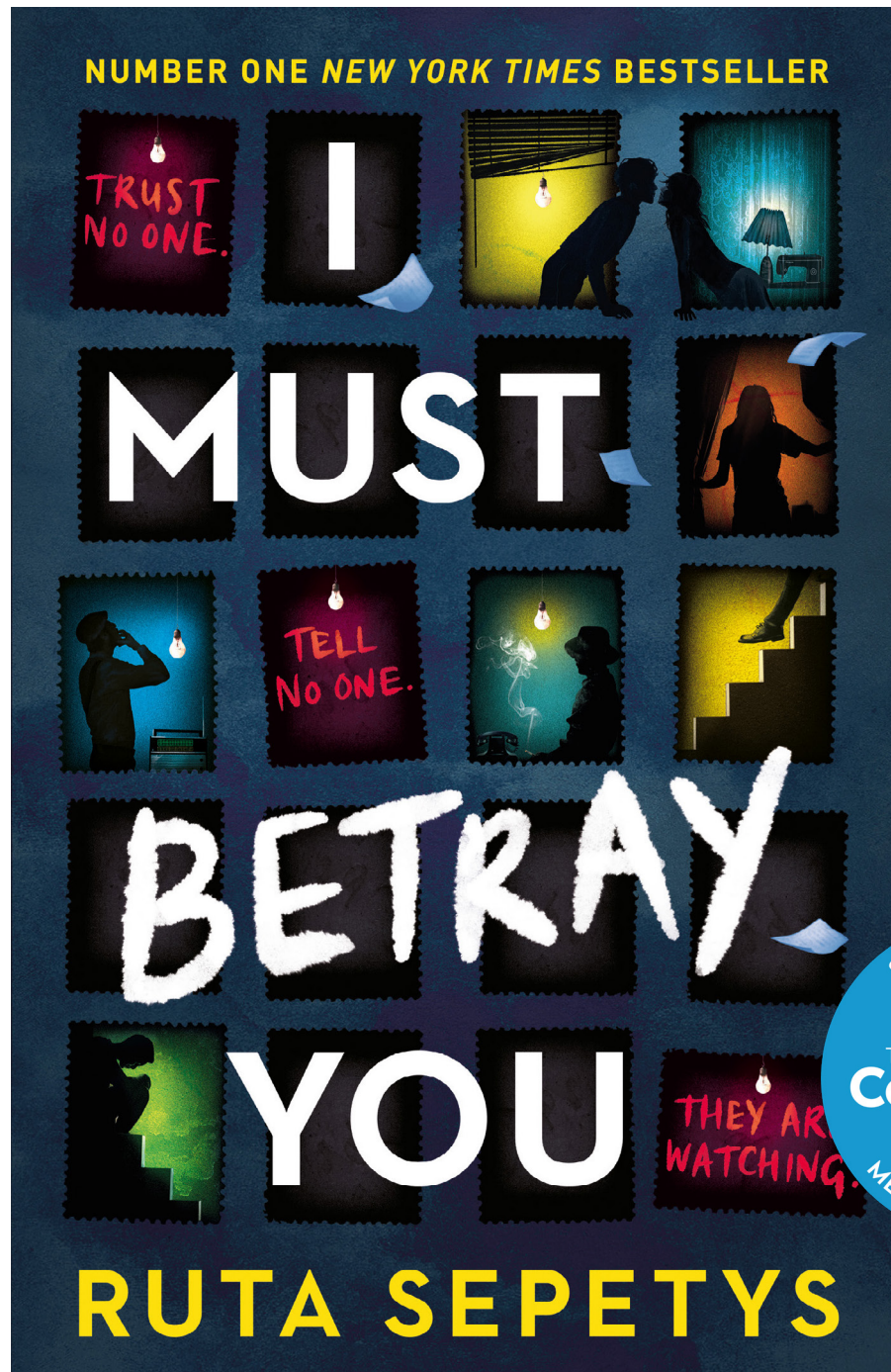


The yoto Carnegies



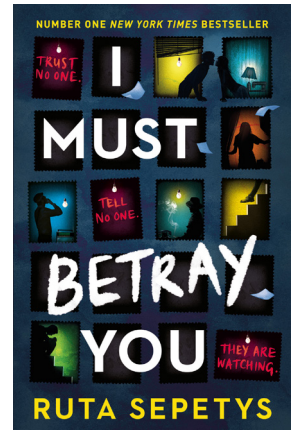
The Yoto Carnegie Shortlist 2023 Shadowing Resources

Activities for *I Must Betray You*

Author: Rita Sepetys

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Age: 13+



Note to Group Leaders

Shortlisted books may contain material that may not be suitable for some students. We recommend that group leaders read the books carefully before sharing or recommending them to students and/or seek parental guidance. We trust that Shadowers and other young readers will be guided by their group leader, librarian, teacher or parent to help them select suitable, enjoyable and age appropriate material from the lists.

Warning

Contains content relating to torture, sexual abuse, coercive control, violence.

General Activities for the Full Shortlist

1. Imagine each of the shortlisted titles as a dessert! Do you think the book you read is a Lemon Sorbet with a light and tangy plot or a Sticky Toffee Pudding with a complex, multi-layered narrative?
2. Take the last line of one of the shortlisted books and use this as the opening line for your own story or poem.
3. Taking each of the shortlisted books in turn, think about the characters and the way they navigate the plot and various subplots. If you were going to wake up inside each book, which character would you choose to be and why?
4. Imagine that two characters are sitting on a bench. Only two people can sit on that bench at any given time, so when a third person arrives, the first person has to make up a reason to leave. Shadowers should think carefully about the different characters from their chosen book; what reasons might they have for being near to or sitting on a park bench. They must then become the character and interact with the other person/people on the bench. You could base this activity on a single title or have some real fun by using characters from across the shortlist. What will happen when characters from different worlds collide?
5. Create your own playlist to accompany a shortlisted book - you might want to highlight a particular theme, tap into the geography or time period of the book or create a playlist that reflects a particular character.
6. Play charades, using non-verbal communication to act out the title of each book and get the rest of your group to guess which book you are presenting.
7. Think of some questions you would like to ask the shortlisted authors and share them on social media using the hashtag **#YotoCarnegies23**
8. Redesign the cover of a shortlisted book. How would your creation differ from the existing cover? What would you include and why? Explore colour, shapes and themes.
9. Think about who would play the main characters in a film or TV adaptation of one or more of the shortlisted titles. Create a cast list and explain your choices.
10. Create your own book trailer for one of the books, or work together to make a trailer for the entire shortlist. This could be a TikTok style 'sell' of the book or a more traditional thematic video.
11. Take the first line from each of the shortlisted novels and create a poem or story by combining them with words and phrases of your own.

Book Activities

1. Rules feature heavily in the story. Think about the impact of rules on the world and the people around us. If you could make the rules, which three rules would you introduce to your school? Would they bring about positive change? How?
2. Christian has a secret notebook in which he writes his thoughts and feelings about his life and the regime. He writes in English. Why do you think this is? What sort of things would you write in a secret notebook? Can you invent a code to keep your secrets secret?
3. What do you think is the difference between keeping something private and keeping something secret? Can you find definitions of each word in the dictionary? Do the dictionary definitions help your understanding?
4. Look up the word “betray” in the dictionary. Does it mean what you thought it meant? Is there any type of betrayal that you would forgive? What would your forgiveness depend on?
5. Cigarettes are used as standard currency in this story. Mrs Drucan’s daughter asks Christian how many cartons of Kents will be needed to turn up the heat at the crematorium. What would you use as currency in a world where bribery was a way of life? Why?
6. All members of Christian’s family take turns to stand in line for hours for whatever food is available. Liliana shares an illicit can of coke with Christian. If food was in short supply, what would you miss the most?
7. Find out five things about Nicolai Ceacescu and his regime and share your findings with the group. What information did you already know? What was the most surprising thing you found out? Did your research make you want to learn more about the events of the novel? How might you go about this?
8. In a group create a poem with a rules or secrets theme. Write one line, fold the paper over so that your line cannot be seen and pass it to the next person to do the same. When everyone has written one line, unfold the paper and see what you have created. How do you feel about the final piece?

Wellbeing/mindfulness:

Try keeping a diary for a week. You don’t need to show it to anyone else. Write down all your innermost thoughts and feelings, your highs and lows, fears and joys. How has this activity made you feel?

About these resources

All of these tasks are designed to be completed in small discussion groups. However, they can easily be done individually. Instead of talking about the tasks, students can write down and keep a record of their ideas.

Before Reading

10 minutes

The title

- Try saying the title of the book '*I Must Betray You*' in as many different ways as you can. For example, you could emphasize the word 'Must', or you could say it in a humorous tone.
 - Having tried several versions of the title, discuss some different ideas about what the book might be like or what it might be about.

10 minutes

A journal

- The story opens by telling us it is taken from a real journal. In fact, although the novel is based on a huge amount of research, Cristian Florescu was not a real person. Why do you think Sepetys included this opening? What difference does this make to your feelings about the story?

During Reading

WARNING: DON'T READ THE QUESTIONS BEFORE READING EACH SECTION!

Read up to the page number listed and then answer the questions. You should spend about 5-10 minutes answering each set of questions. (Page numbers are taken from the 2022 Hodder Children's edition.)

Read to the end of page 31

- What is interesting or surprising about the book so far?
- How does Cristian's school compare to yours?
- How would you have responded to 'Agent Paddle Hands'?
- Cristian thinks he knows who betrayed him. Who do you think he has in mind?

Read to the end of page 58

- What little details are building up a picture of life in Romania in the 80s?
- What impression do you get of Cristian's family members and the different ways they cope with life under Ceausescu?
- Why do you think people tell jokes about the regime?
- What do Romanians think America is like? How do they get this impression?
- How does Cristian feel about what he reads in Dan's notebook?
- How do people get and pass on information that the regime doesn't want them to know?

Read to the end of page 81

- Why does Cristian punch Luca?
- What are the differences between Dan's life and Cristian's, even though they both live in Romania? How does seeing the homes and families of Dan's friends affect Cristian?
- What are the pressures on Cristian's relationship with Liliana?
- What do Agent Paddle Hand's reports add to your understanding?

Read to the end of page 113

- How is Cristian affected by what he sees and reads in the American library? Which of Dan's actions suggest that he doesn't really understand what life is like for ordinary Romanians?
- Why doesn't Cristian tell Liliana about his notebook?
- How does Bunu know there is an informer in the family?



Read to the end of page 187

- How did you react when Cristian opened Liliana's note?
- How does Cristian's version of his meeting with Paddle Hands differ from the agent's report?
- What is the effect on the different family members of what has happened to Bunu? Do you consider Cristian to be brave?
- What does Cristian realise about friendship under this regime?

Read to the end of page 213

- How has Cristian's father changed?
- How did you react to what Cristian found out about Cici? How does it change his feelings about Luca?

Read to the end of the book

- What are some of the effects of the events in Timisoara?
- The way the demonstration is dealt with is shocking. Do you think it is important, or inappropriate to include such graphic descriptions of beatings and the way people are treated afterwards in a book for young adults?
- Why do you think Cici writes 'a revolution eats its heroes'. Did you understand this differently when you had finished the book, including the epilogue?
- After the main story has ended, Sepetys includes a number of extras – the epilogue, photos and an author's note. What do these add to the book, for you?

After Reading

Initial Thoughts?

Spend 15-20 minutes discussing some or all of the questions below.

- What are your overall impressions of this novel?
- Which moments most stick in your memory?
- Who is the most admirable character in the novel?
- What connections can you make, for example with other things you have read, things you have watched, games you have played, or with real life?
- For you what was the most surprising twist in the story?
- Why do you think Sepetys included the Van Dorns as characters in the novel?
- What are your thoughts about how difficult subject matter is handled in this novel?
- Based on reading *I Must Betray You*, how likely are you to read other novels by Ruta Sepetys?

What's *I Must Betray You* about?

- Spend one or two minutes writing down a single sentence that begins: '*I Must Betray You* is about ...'
- Share your different sentences and discuss.
- Next read the sentences below that give further ideas about what the novel is about.
- If you are working in a group, spend 5-10 minutes sorting the sentences out, from the one you agree with most to the one you agree with least.
- Finally, decide on the statement you agree with most. It can be one from the list or your own. Write down a few ideas about how *I Must Betray You* relates to your chosen statement

***I Must Betray You* is about...**

- A love story.
- Trust and betrayal.
- How teenagers can have an impact on history.
- The importance of freedom.
- The possibility of rebelling, even against extreme oppression.
- People trying to do the right thing in very difficult circumstances.

Exploring the book further

Use one or more of these tasks to explore *I Must Betray You* further.

Reflections on Cristian

The whole novel is told in the first-person voice of Cristian. He plays an important part in the lives of lots of the other characters. Write a sentence or two in the voices of two of these characters, expressing their thoughts and feelings about Cristian.

- Liliana
- Mama
- Father
- Agent Paddle Hands
- Luca
- Dan Van Dorn

Spend 10-15 minutes on this activity.

Is it communism?

During the 19th Century, there was much discussion about what an ideal society would look like, one in which working class people would not live impoverished lives working long hours to make other people wealthy. One version of what this society would look like is called communism. Here are some of the central principles of communism. Discuss how the book presents the contrast between the what the Romanian regime say they believe (such as that everyone is equal) and the reality.

Principles:

- A classless society – everyone has equal value, no division between rich and poor.
- No private property. Public ownership of the main means of production (such as factories) and natural resources. The government controls the distribution of resources and goods so that these can be allocated fairly, according to people's needs.
- The government works for the good of everyone in society rather than a powerful elite.
- Instead of competition, everyone works for the common good. 'From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs.'

Spend 10-15 minutes on this activity.

Turning history into fiction

I Must Betray You draws on actual historical events that took place in Romania in the 1980s. It is Ruta Sepetys' fifth historical novel, and her fourth exploring the lives of teens living under totalitarian regimes.

- Discuss these statements, exploring your view about why a writer might be drawn to writing about the lives of ordinary people under a repressive regime.

Setting the novel in this kind of environment gives the writer lots of opportunities for creating tension.

I think you can learn more about real life events from a novel than from a history book. Novels are written to be memorable, so the important history really sticks in your mind.

Writing about life under an oppressive regime allows the writer to add dramatic plot twists because everyone has secrets and you don't know who to trust or when someone might be arrested.

*I think that fictionalised versions of real history are a really good starting point for more exploration. Now that I've read *I Must Betray You* I want to go away and find out more about Romania.*

Reading about life in Romania under the Ceauşescus makes me feel lucky to live when and where I do.

Reading about life in Romania under the Ceauşescus makes me think about inequality, injustice and oppression that occur in our society, even though things are obviously not repressive in the same way.

Spend 15-20 minutes on this activity.

Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of the book.

- Read all of the reviews and discuss which comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working individually, write your own paragraph expressing your views about the novel.
- If possible, share your reviews with a group.

Submit your reviews to the Carnegie Shadowing Scheme website. This can be accessed at:
https://yotocarnegies.co.uk/?post_type=books&p=12668

Give yourself up to an hour to complete this activity.

A. Cristian's journal added a strong element of verisimilitude to the story, and also helped to accomplish that historical fiction thing I really like where the book makes you feel like maybe, just maybe, these people exist in real life and aren't just fictional.

<https://frappesandfiction.com/>

B. The power of *I Must Betray You* [is] it doesn't just describe the destabilizing effects of being spied on; it will make you experience them too.

New York Times book review

C. Cristian is tormented with his inner struggle about what to do and, to add to that, he falls in love. As if relationships are not complicated enough, a real openness is not possible. Too many things are left unsaid for a truly deep connection to be possible. That is available for the friendships in his life as well. The sense of loneliness in this kind of world is difficult to bear.

And yet, a lot of jokes are sprinkled throughout. That I find typical of Romanians (I am one). No matter what happens and the more difficult something is to deal with, the more we cover it up in laughter and do not really deal with it until it blows up. It is what happened with the Revolution. In all Eastern Europe the Revolutions were bloodless in 1989. Here, Ceausescu was executed. It was simply too much to bear any more. This book shows why. I never read another one to show it better.

<https://readfinebooks.com/2022/07/23/i-must-betray-you-book-review-by-a-romanian/>

D. I'm old enough to remember the Romanian revolution well. The revolution succeeded, the Ceausescus receiving summary justice on Christmas Day 1989. But it was a close-run thing: what tipped the balance was the Romanian Army siding with the revolutionaries against the Securitate. I remember that this went on for several days, with the likely winner not at all clear, and the whole of Europe almost praying for the Army, while fearing that the Securitate would just have too much power and malevolence.

While Sepetys tells the story quite well, for me, she somehow doesn't create empathetic characters in Cristian, Liliانا and the rest – the nearest is Bunu, Cristian's grandfather. Description of the climactic demonstrations and of the Jilava prison are OK but, for me, could give a better sense of the importance, drama and precariousness of the decisive days. 'The Army is with us!' was the cry of the young revolutionaries. Somehow, Sepetys doesn't quite get the sense of crescendo that year-end 1989 represented.

CBS Vine Voice on www.amazon.co.uk

Writing Activities

On your own, or with a partner, complete one or more of these writing activities to help you develop your thoughts about *I Must Betray You* further.

You will need 30-60 minutes for each activity.

- Write your own short story either starting or ending with the sentence '*I must betray you.*'

Imagine that you are the writer of *I Must Betray You*, Ruta Sepetys.

- Write a blog giving your thoughts about dealing with extreme violence in a book for young people. You might like to write about:
 - Your thoughts about young people knowing the truth about historical events.
 - The language you used when describing violence.
 - How you described your characters' responses.
 - How you hope readers will respond.
- Write a diary entry in the voice of Cici, expressing her thoughts and feelings after Cristian sees her in the car with Agent Paddle Hands. You could include:
 - The difficult life of a double agent
 - Her hopes and fears for Cristian
 - Her thoughts about whether to tell him what's really going on.
- Write a speech persuading teenagers to tackle something you think is unjust and explaining how they should go about it.