

The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg Study Guide

The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg by Nicholas Dawidoff

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Plot Summary

The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg is a non-fiction work by writer Nicholas Dawidoff. In this book, Dawidoff explores the life story of Moe Berg, a highly educated lawyer who was also a professional baseball player for sixteen years before joining the OIAA and then the OSS in the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. *The Catcher Was a Spy* is a true story of one man who was an enigma that many still are trying to understand today.

Moe Berg was the third child of Ukrainian immigrants, determined to fit in in their new country. Moe's father owned a laundry before training to become a pharmacist and owning his own drug store. Moe's father worked hard and disapproved of what he saw as a child's game, baseball. Despite this, Moe became a star baseball player during his years at Princeton University and later became a professional ballplayer.

Moe Berg's family was Jewish, but his father was unhappy with the stigma his religion placed on him in his new country and chose to deny his faith, even though he never changed his name or made any covert effort to disguise his birthright. Bernard Berg refused to allow Yiddish or Hebrew to be spoken in his home and refused to have his sons celebrate their bar mitzvah. For this reason, Moe and his siblings grew up being teased by schoolmates for their religion, but not celebrating or otherwise learning about it, leading to an ambiguous and often confused sense of their own heritage.

Moe played professional baseball for sixteen years. In the beginning, Moe played shortstop. Moe had the potential to be a starting shortstop for a major league team, but early in his career he chose to miss spring training camp and the first few months of the season in order to attend law school. After several years in professional baseball, Moe found himself volunteering to play catcher when the catcher on his team was injured and the manager was desperate for someone to take his place. Again Moe shone and had the potential to be a starting catcher, but he injured his knee and was unable to play at peak condition for several seasons.

Moe moved from team to team during his sixteen years as a player. In 1939, Moe was offered the position of coach for one of the teams he previously played for. Moe took this job and worked at it for three years. However, at the beginning of World War II, Moe was approached by the OIAA, the Office of Inter-American Affairs, to become an agent of propaganda for them. Eventually Moe agreed. In his first few months with the OIAA, Moe told everyone he could about the films he took in Japan while he was there teaching young Japanese people how to play baseball. Moe showed the films to several groups of people with both the OIAA and the OSS, Office of Strategic Services, the film and later would brag to his many friends and acquaintances that his film helped to plot the Doolittle Raids in 1942.

As part of the OIAA, Berg went to many countries in South and Central America in 1942 and visited airbases and other military settlements, making recommendations on how to raise morale. The leaders at OIAA often did not know where Berg was during this trip,



but he was later praised for his good work. After this trip, Berg quit the OIAA, and joined the OSS.

During World War II, the American government became aware of the new nuclear technology that scientists all over the world were using to create atomic bombs, including scientists in America. This concerned the government, which became worried that another country, especially Germany, would develop the bomb first. As a result, the government assigned two separate agencies to locate the lead scientists in Germany and learn how close they were to developing the atomic bomb. Moe was part of this team. As a part of the team, Moe went to Europe and developed relationships with many physicists who had information on the progress Germany's Werner Heisenberg was making. In the end, it was Moe who was sent to a lecture Heisenberg was giving in Switzerland and determine how close he was to developing a bomb. If he thought Heisenberg was close, Moe was to kill him. However, Moe was able to determine that Germany was still years from developing the atomic bomb.

After the war, Moe receive the Medal of Freedom for his work, which he turned down. He was released from the OSS as it was disbanded and eventually became the CIA. For many years, Moe petitioned the CIA for a job and received several contracts through them, but failed to meet expectations. Late in his life, Moe became something of a vagabond, moving from place to place, living off the generosity of friends and acquaintances. In 1972, Moe became ill after a fall out of bed and hospitalized, where doctors discovered too late that Moe suffered from a ruptured abdominal aneurysm. Moe died May 29, 1972.



Prologue and Chapters 1-2

Prologue and Chapters 1-2 Summary and Analysis

A sports fan who writes for such magazines as Sports Illustrated, Nicholas Dawidoff has many things in common with Moe Berg, the most obvious being their love of sports and their Ivy League educations. This is Nicholas Dawidoff's first book.

Prologue. Many people think of Moe Berg in many different ways. Linda McCarthy, CIA museum curator, idolizes Moe Berg. Allan Siegal, assistant managing editor of the New York Times, receives letters from someone claiming to be Moe Berg, correcting his grammar. Charles Owen collects Moe Berg paraphernalia, including pictures and papers given to him by Sam Berg, Moe's brother. George Allen, an antiquarian bookshop owner, thinks Moe Berg is a fraud.

Chapter 1. The Public Berg: Professor Moe. John Kieran, a sports columnist, created the public Moe Berg. Whenever Kieran had little to write about, he would write about Moe, calling him Professor Moe and crediting him with odd comments or making fun of his eccentricities. Berg was highly educated, a trained lawyer who practiced during the off season. Berg was always friendly with the press. In fact, he seemed quite willing to talk to them and often interviewed himself. Berg was also known to travel with great numbers of books, often seen reading huge volumes that he regarded as light reading. Berg was also proficient in multiple languages, including French, Japanese, Hebrew, and Sanskrit.

After playing professional baseball from 1923 through 1939, then working as a coach until 1942, Berg abruptly quit baseball and joined the Office of Inter-American Affairs, where he spent a few months maintaining friendly relationships between the United States and South America. Soon after that, Berg quit OIAA and joined the newly formed Office of Strategic Services, or the OSS, the precursor to the CIA.

Chapter 2. Youth: Runt Wolfe. Bernard Berg left the tiny Ukrainian village of Kippinya in 1894 and moved west to find prosperity. After some time, Bernard Berg settled in New York where he began working in a laundry. In time, Berg came to own the laundry. Berg was joined by his wife, Rose, and they soon had three children, Sam, Ethel, and Morris. Unhappy with the laundry business, Berg trained to become a pharmacist and opened his own pharmacy in Newark in 1906. A Jew by birth, Berg did not like the stigma of his religion and he stopped practicing it, banning the use of Yiddish in his home.

In the prologue, the author offers the reader a glimpse at the impact Moe Berg had on the people around him. Some people worshipped Moe Berg, thought of him as some kind of hero, while others thought he was a mediocre ball player but a fascinating man. Others thought Moe Berg was a liar and a fake, while others simply found him mysterious. In this way, the author introduces the complex personality that was Moe Berg and the mystery that this book is designed to solve.



In chapter one, the author gives a summary of Moe Berg's life. Moe Berg played baseball in the major leagues for sixteen years and then worked as a coach for three more years. During this time, Moe was a favorite with the sports writers because he was such an oddity that they could always find something to write about with him. Moe was highly educated, something that was unusual, if not uncommon, in his time. This made him an oddity. Therefore, even though Moe was not a standout player, he was a popular player. After his years in baseball, Moe began working for the OIAA and then the OSS. These organizations utilized Moe's language skills and intelligence, using him to gain information during World War II that might have helped in the effort against Germany.

In chapter two, the author begins the bulk of the biography. Chapter two describes how Moe Berg's parents came to America and began living the American dream. Moe's father was determined not only to become successful, but also to fit in with his friends and neighbors. For this reason, Moe's father became disillusioned with his religion and banned it from his home. No Yiddish or Hebrew was spoken in the Berg household, although Moe's father would relent at one point and teach Moe Hebrew. For this reason, as well, none of the Berg children would celebrate any of the religious ceremonies common in Jewish families. Despite this, Moe himself would never be able to overcome the stigma of being a Jew.



Chapters 3-5

Chapters 3-5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3. The Stiff Collar. Moe began attending Princeton in 1919 after brief attendance at New York University. Moe was a quiet student who stayed mostly to himself. Part of the reason for this was an underlying prejudice against Jews that existed at the school at the time. Despite this, Moe was an excellent student, making high grades throughout his time at Princeton, with exception of one semester, during which he struggled in two classes. Moe was also outstanding on the baseball field. Moe played shortstop for the Princeton Tigers. His batting average was mediocre, but his performance at shortstop caught the attention of scouts from the major leagues.

After his graduation from Princeton in 1923, Moe was approached by two baseball clubs, the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Robins. Both teams were trying to find a Jewish player who would draw in the Jewish fans. The Giants had a full roster, including a strong showing at shortstop that would insure Moe would see little playing time. For this reason, Moe signed with the Robins.

Chapter 4. Robin in Paris. Moe joined the Robins immediately and played in a handful of games in August and September, much to his mother's delight. When the baseball season ended, Moe traveled to Paris. While there, Moe visited the Louvre, the Tuileries, and the produce market at Les Halles. At the same time, Moe ran into the Giants manager, John McGraw, and they had dinner together where Moe ordered his meal in fluent French. Also while in Paris, Moe attended multiple classes at the Sorbonne.

Chapter 5. Good Field, No Hit. Moe finally returned to the United States in late winter of 1924 and was immediately sent to the minors when the coach saw that his hitting had not improved. At first Moe refused, but soon joined the Minneapolis Millers in mid-April. Moe played mediocly in Minneapolis that summer, but when he was loaned to the Toledo Mud Hens for the remainder of the season, he shone on a losing team. The following season, Moe was in Reading, Pennsylvania, playing for the Keys. Moe played so well that the Chicago Cubs wanted him, but the White Sox had an option on him that they quickly exercised. However, before the start of the next season, Moe informed the team that he would not be able to join them until two months into the season because he needed to complete his semester at Columbia Law School.

In the 1927 season with the White Sox, the manager needed a catcher. Moe spoke up, suggesting a fellow teammate who had played catcher in college, but the manager misunderstood him and put Moe in as catcher. Moe played very well and soon became a permanent catcher for the team. In fact, some of the pitchers even came to request Moe as their catcher. In 1929, Moe missed his opportunity to graduate with his law school class because he failed evidence, but was able to take it again later and passed. Later, during the baseball season, Moe would injure his knee.



In these chapters, the reader follows Moe Berg through his early years of baseball, beginning with his time at Princeton. Princeton is a prestigious school where Moe Berg received a first class education. At the same time, Moe showed his prowess in baseball with the Princeton baseball team where he was noticed by scouts sent to look at another player. Moe would be known for a time as the best shortstop ever to play at Princeton, showing the reader that despite his mediocre professional career, Moe was a good ballplayer. At the same time, however, the religion Moe's father had turned his back on years earlier would begin to play an ugly role in Moe's life, characterizing him despite his own ambivalent feelings on the subject.

Even as Moe began to pursue a professional career in baseball, his interest in continuing his education took him to Paris where he studied at the Sorbonne, and to law school where he chose to miss the first few months of two baseball seasons to study for his law degree. This marked Moe in the early years of his career, making it appear that education was more important to him than baseball. However, baseball was deeply important to Moe, providing him with a lifestyle that allowed him to study at his whim. In the end, however, Moe's baseball career would be marked by his distraction and later by an injury that would create in him a lifelong third string catcher.



Chapters 6-7

Chapters 6-7 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 6. You Never Knew He Was Around. The 1930 and 1931 baseball seasons were lost for Berg, who was not physically well enough to play again. Therefore, in October, 1930, Moe began practicing law with a Manhattan law firm, a job that would not last long. In April of 1931, Moe was traded to the Cleveland Indians. It was about this time that Moe's eccentricities became more pronounced. In 1932, Moe was released from the Indians and quickly picked up by the Washington Senators.

Chapter 7. Strange Foreigner with Camera. In 1932, Moe made the first of two visits to Japan as a member of a team of players sent to teach the Japanese how to play baseball. Moe was fascinated with Japan, embracing all of its oddities and traditions. Moe even reportedly fell in love with one of three geishas he met at a party one night.

After leaving Japan, Moe traveled throughout the Orient, moving through Manchuria, seeing the Great Wall, and into Southeast Asia to India and the Middle East. In late spring, Moe returned to the American South to attend spring training camp. In the fall of 1934, Moe was invited to return to Japan on a trip that would include such baseball greats as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. Moe was entertaining on the trip to Japan, joking with the others, even convincing Babe Ruth that he had learned Japanese in two weeks.

While in Japan, the American players were to play multiple exhibition games with the Japanese players. One day, Moe dressed in a kimono and snuck into a local hospital where he went onto the roof and took film of the city. Moe continued to take video all over the city, even taking the film camera into Russia as he continued his journey. However, Moe was stopped several times and his film confiscated. Fortunately, Moe was able to return home with several reels of film.

In these chapters, Moe continues to play baseball, but his injured knee has relegated him to the third string position. For this reason, Moe's private life became more of an interesting thing at this point. Moe became even more eccentric than before, wearing the same type of suit daily, reading profusely, and reading multiple newspapers throughout the day. Moe also took two trips to Japan, both of which had a huge impact on Moe. Moe would embrace the traditions and customs of Japan for the rest of his life, often welcoming reporters into his hotel rooms while wearing nothing but a kimono. During this time, Moe also took home movies of Japan, movies that he would later show to the OSS officials in an attempt to aid the war effort during World War II.



Chapters 8-9

Chapters 8-9 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 8. Mr. Berg, You've Been Brilliant. In April of 1935, Moe took a job as a catcher with the Red Sox. In Boston, Berg's reputation as an adequate catcher and terrible batter would continue. As Moe began to play less and less, he began spending a great deal of his time talking in the bullpen.

In 1939, Moe appeared on a radio show called Information, Please! Moe would be asked back two more times, but when he was asked legal and sports questions on his third visit, both questions he had specifically requested he not be asked, Moe was rude and never returned to the show. Thanks to the show, and the growing Jewish fan base, Moe became something of a celebrity during this time period. It was also during this time that Ted Williams joined the Red Sox. Moe acted as something of a mentor to Williams. This led to the team manager asking Moe to take another young player, Dom DiMaggio, under his wing. Moe disliked rooming with DiMaggio when a practical joke was played on him by some of the other players, but otherwise was a good mentor. This led to Cronin, manager of the Red Sox, asking Moe to become a coach for the team.

Chapter 9. Southern Junket. When the United States went to war in 1941, Roosevelt asked William 'Wild Bill' Donovan to coordinate a new organization styled after England's MI-6, the OSS. At about the same time, Nelson Rockefeller, a member of the Manhattan petroleum family, proposed an organization that would send representatives into South and Central America to encourage a strong bond between the countries called the OIAA. It was the OIAA that would court Moe Berg in the spring of 1942, often coming to him at the ballpark to discuss his possible role with the OIAA. Eventually Moe agreed, quitting baseball after eighteen years, and joining the OIAA.

As a member of the OIAA, Moe began telling people in the OSS about his films of Japan. Over a period of months, Moe showed these films to a great number of people and was repeatedly told how valuable the films would be. In reality, the films were probably not as helpful as maps drawn by people actually living in Japan closer to the beginning of World War II, but the films helped Moe build relationships and prove his value to the organizations. Moe was scheduled over several months to go to South America to promote a positive relationship with the Americans. Moe visited military basis and small villages, making recommendations on things that could make morale better. Moe was in South America for several months, often traveling without anyone's knowledge so that no one knew where he would be at any given time. However, the trip was deemed highly successful and Moe was considered a strong asset to the American war effort.

After returning from South America, Moe quit the OIAA and filled out an application to become an employee of the OSS. About this same time, Moe began an affair with a pianist named Estella Huni. Moe lived with Estella while in New York even though he



listed his brother's address on his OSS application. Moe and Estella were extremely close, but when Moe left for Europe in 1944 on assignment for the OSS, he and Estella grew apart and she eventually married someone else.

These chapters chronicle the final days of Moe's baseball career. Moe began to play less and less, finally becoming a coach after proving his value in such a role while mentoring younger players. Moe would spend more than three years in this role before finally quitting baseball for good and joining the OIAA. Moe's job with the OIAA was to be a propaganda agent. Moe was supposed to help the South American people continue to be friendly with Americans. As part of this, Moe visited military installation throughout South America and made recommendations on how to improve the morale of the soldiers and to improve their relations with the citizens living around the bases. Moe was independent, often moving around without informing his superiors of his location, a trait that would mark Moe for the rest of his life. However, his mission was an overall success, helping Moe make the transition from the OIAA to the OSS.

The author mentions in chapter nine the application Moe filled out for the OSS and how some of the information on it reveals things about Moe that perhaps he had never revealed about himself before. For example, the author points out that Moe only mentions a small number of languages in which he was proficient even though he had bragged about many more during his baseball career and the absence of his knowledge of Sanskrit and Yiddish, assuming Moe left these off because he did not think they would be of value in the OSS. Finally, the author mentions in this same chapter the only long term romantic relationship of note Moe would have in his life. Estella Huni was a pianist with some of the same eclectic interests as Moe, with whom he lived for a significant amount of time before going to Europe during the war with the OSS. This relationship is important because it touches on a more human side of Moe, a vulnerable side of Moe that was always hidden from the world. It also reflects the habit of hiding within himself that eventually led to the end of this relationship when Moe disappeared in Europe and failed to keep Estella updated on his location or affections.



Chapters 10-11

Chapters 10-11 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 10. Remus Heads for Rome. By early fall of 1943, Moe had taken the oath of office and was an official member of the OSS.

As Moe Berg waited for an assignment with the OSS, the American government was growing more and more concerned about a scientist named Werner Heisenberg in Germany. At the beginning of the war, a scientist from Europe informed the Americans that Heisenberg had chosen to remain in Germany despite his distaste for the Nazis. Heisenberg, a leading physicist and the man most likely to develop the first atomic weapon, was a huge problem for the American government. The government was deeply concerned that Heisenberg would perfect the atomic bomb before American scientists and that Germany would be able to use it as a weapon against the Allies. For this reason, the American government decided they needed to collect European scientists and encourage them to defect to America, as well as find Heisenberg and kidnap him if necessary.

Moe Berg was assigned to AZUSA, a mission to encourage Italian scientists to come to America. In late spring of 1944, Moe Berg made his way to Italy.

Chapter 11. A Perfect Spy. Moe flew into England on board a military transport plane in May of 1944. In late May, Moe flew from Casablanca to Algiers. From there, Moe would travel to Cairo and southern Italy. Two days after Rome was liberated on June 4, 1944, Moe arrived in Rome. Immediately, Moe began visiting the scientists given to him by his supervisors at the OSS. The first name on his list was Edoardo Amaldi. Amaldi had already received a visit from Moe's Alsos's counterpart, Colonel Boris Pash. Pash would later claim that he was visited by Amaldi, who had supposedly decided to go to America with an American Colonel, whom Pash claimed was Moe Berg. The author does not find this credible, but believes that Moe did get through to Amaldi because he became a regular visitor at Amaldi's Rome residence. Amaldi would tell Moe that the Italians could not build an atomic bomb because they did not have adequate resources at their lab. However, he felt the Germans could, but they were ten years away from perfecting the science. Amaldi also told Berg that besides Heisenberg, he should be concerned about a chemist named Walther Bothe.

Moe also visited scientist Gian Carlo Wick, a theoretical physicist who told Moe that many physicists made routine visits to Switzerland for conferences and lectures and that this would be a likely place for Moe to find Heisenberg. Wick was also able to tell Moe where Heisenberg was more than likely living and where he was continuing his work.

Moe spent the summer of 1944 touring Italy with his OSS supplied car and driver, Aldo Icardi. Not only did Moe and Icardi go sightseeing quite often, but Moe continued to visit



the scientists on his list, learning all he could about atomic weapons and Heisenberg. Toward the end of June, Moe's boss, Robert Furman, came to Italy and instructed him to investigate a optical laboratory in Florence that was thought to be helping compress fissionable material for Germany's plutonium bombs. Moe was to visit the Galileo Company as soon as possible. However, Moe put this visit off for multiple reasons. First, Moe was to find a young aeronautical engineer, Antonio Ferri, and talk him into moving to the United States. Ferri had become an anti-Facist partisan guerrilla band leader in the mountains, only to return to Rome shortly after it was liberated. Moe found Ferri and befriended him, eventually convincing him to work with the United States.

Moe Berg turned his attention back to the Galileo Company only to learn Florence was still under German control. For a short time Moe lived with a group of soldiers behind German lines, an experience he enjoyed but did not relish. Finally, Moe made it to the Galileo Company, where he determined that it was not capable of being used to help build German plutonium bombs. Shortly after returning to Rome, Moe learned Ferris was being taken to the United States. From there, Moe went to London.

During this time, an assassination attempt was planned against Werner Heisenberg to keep him from building an atomic weapon for Germany, despite multiple reports that he was years from perfecting the science. An expert sharpshooter named Carl Eifler was employed to kill Heisenberg, but at the last minute his mission was cancelled. By the fall of 1944, the OSS had determined where Heisenberg was living. Plans were made to send Moe into Germany to find Heisenberg and determine how close he was to perfecting the atomic bomb. Before this took place, however, it was discovered that Heisenberg was to be in Switzerland in late December to give a lecture. Moe was instructed to go to Switzerland and attend the lecture. If Moe thought that Heisenberg was close to creating an atomic bomb, he should kill Heisenberg right there in the lecture hall. Moe attended the lecture, identifying himself as a Swiss physics student to Heisenberg while also pretending to be an Arab businessman and French merchant. Moe listened to the lecture, understanding only a small portion of it. However, Moe came to the conclusion that Heisenberg was not close to perfecting the atomic bomb.

After his assignment involving Heisenberg ended, Moe was introduced to Paul Scherrer, the director of the Physics Institute at the Eidgenossische Technische Hochschule in Zurich. Moe spoke to Scherrer about transplanting Heisenberg to the United States. Scherrer invited Moe to a dinner party at his house to which Heisenberg was invited. Heisenberg found himself criticized for remaining loyal to Germany despite the atrocities the Nazis were committing. After the party, Moe followed Heisenberg out of the house and asked him a great number of questions, forcing Heisenberg to be polite, but distant.

Over the next few months, Moe would become close to Scherrer and his family as Scherrer slipped Moe information about the German scientists. At the same time, Moe began reporting to the OSS office in Bern lead by Allen Dulles. Moe and Dulles immediately disliked one another and Dulles complained about Moe multiple times to his superiors and was informed that Moe was a top agent and was to be indulged. As spring arrived, the war began to resolve itself and Moe found himself sent home. Moe was home in Newark on April 25, 1945.



In these chapters, the author chronicles Moe Berg's time with the OSS. Moe becomes an agent with the OSS shortly after his trip to South America as a propaganda agent for the OIAA. As part of the OSS, Moe becomes involved in the attempts to learn about and stop the development of an atomic bomb by the Germans. The American government hears rumors that Werner Heisenberg is developing the bomb and that he has remained loyal to the German government. This raises concern because the American government does not want Germany to use such a weapon against them. In this capacity, Moe goes to Europe and becomes acquainted with some of the most important physicists of the time period, including being a conduit to help one physicist spy for the Americans and helping an aeronautical engineer defect to the United States. Not only this, but Moe comes into contact with Werner Heisenberg himself and is ordered to kill the scientist if it appears he is close to creating an atomic bomb for the German government. However, Moe comes to the same conclusion governments around the world will reach after the war: Heisenberg was never close to creating an atomic bomb.

Moe's work for the OSS is impressive, but once again Moe's work is marked by his independence and his inability to account for his movements and the use of government funds. The OSS does not mind Moe's way of working, with a few exceptions including Allen Dulles, the head of an OSS station in Bern, Switzerland, because he gets results. However, this transient way of living will come back to haunt Moe later in his life.



Chapters 12-14

Chapters 12-14 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 12. Always Good Company. At the end of World War II, a cold war began between the United States and several European countries over the atomic bomb. The American government began to gather physicists known to be working on this technology as well as materials used in the building of these bombs. This caused tension between the Americans and other governments of equal power, including Russia. As a result of this, Moe was sent by the OSS in June of 1945 to see Lise Meitner, an Austrian physicist in exile in Switzerland. While visiting her, Moe convinced Meitner to write a letter to her former partner, Dr. Otto Hahn. Meitner's letter was filled with outrage that Hahn stayed in Germany despite the atrocities the Nazis committed against Jews such as herself. Moe read the letter and gave it to his superiors, but it was never sent to Dr. Hahn.

After visiting with Meitner, Moe was sent on a tour of the United States with Paul Scherrer. That fall Moe and Scherrer returned to Switzerland. A short time later, Harry Truman signed an executive order disbanding the OSS. The OSS then became the SSU, Strategic Services Unit. Two of Moe's beloved supervisors, including Donovan, resigned and planned to return to practicing law. As this was happening, Moe was in Europe with several other agents helping to round up other scientists. In January, Moe visited with Meitner again, facing her anger at his failure to send her letter to Hahn. During this visit, Moe was able to get from Meitner a promise that she would not take a job offer from the Russians. Moe was then sent to Zurich for a lecture by physicist Joliot-Curie. Moe came away from that lecture convinced Joliot-Curie was a strong Communist and would join the Russians if given the chance. However, the Russians were not interested in Joliot-Curie because of his radical views and highly public persona. Moe was also sent to see Niels Bohr, a physicist in Copenhagen who was seen visiting with a leading Russian physicist named Peter Kapitza. Moe was able to confirm that Bohr was uninterested in helping the Russians. This work earned Moe a raise from his new SSU supervisor.

The SSU had a problem with Moe Berg, however. Their accountant discovered that Moe had used a large sum of OSS money during the war, but he never turned in receipts or reports that informed them as to how the money was used. When they came to Moe and asked for an explanation or the return of the money, Moe was offended. Despite winning the Medal of Freedom for his service in the OSS, and refusing it, Moe chose to resign even though the SSU eventually decided that not only did Moe not owe them money, but they owed Moe money.

Chapter 13. A Life Without Calendar. Shortly after leaving the SSU and settling in his brother's home in Newark, Moe learned that his business partner in a film and stationary business called Novelart Manufacturing Company had gone bankrupt and left Moe stuck for seven thousand five hundred dollars owed to the United States government for



an unfulfilled contract. The IRS began hounding Moe for the money and he ignored them at first. Finally Moe settled the contract with the IRS, but years later and after much aggravation. At the same time, Moe refused to take a nine to five job and instead repeatedly approached the CIA for a job. The CIA did offer Moe a contract in 1952. However, Moe acted as he always had before with the OSS, going off on his own, never informing his supervisors of his whereabouts, and spending large amounts of money. All this might have been overlooked, but the CIA was unhappy when Moe returned from assignment and refused to tell them what he had discovered. Moe's contract was renewed the following year, but he was not sent on assignments, and then his contract was not renewed in 1954. Moe would continue to seek work from the CIA for many years, but would be refused.

Moe spent the rest of his life as a transient, moving from place to place and relying on the kindness of friends and acquaintances to meet his needs. Moe became a regular at Princeton, arriving at the home of old friend H.P. Robertson the night of the game and gaining an invitation to dinner and a place to stay for the night. In return, Moe would tell stories of his days in baseball and in the war. In Cleveland, Moe stayed at the home of distant cousins, while in Philadelphia he visited with I.M. Levitt, an old friend from the Franklin Institute. In Oklahoma, Moe would visit Tony Calvert, a fellow OSS agent and friend. Moe tried to convince Calvert to invest in Israeli drilling rights with him, but Calvert politely declined. In California, Moe would visit with Robertson who had taken a job at Cal Tech, often acting oddly and going out of his way to convince the Robertsons he was still a spy. In New York, Moe enjoyed a friendship with Theodore Von Karman, an aeronautical engineer he met through Ferris. Von Karman help found AGARD, the NATO Advisory Group for Aeronautic Research and Development. Through this group, Von Karman was able to give Moe a temporary job in Paris that allowed him to travel freely and independently as he had done with the OSS and make money for it.

Boston was one of Moe Berg's favorite cities and he could often be seen walking the streets or browsing its many bookstores. Moe became good friends with a bookseller there, a friendship that was tested when Moe felt the man failed to listen to him enough or offer him free books. While in Boston, Moe befriended a young woman and her husband and later helped the woman through the sudden departure of her husband from the marriage.

Also in Boston, Moe met Harry Broley, a consultant for the Arthur D. Little Company and worked with him on several consulting jobs, including a job in which he investigated the possibility of placing a major baseball team in Kansas City.

In Washington, D.C., Moe made friends with many train conductors and as a result was able to travel on most trains for free. In Washington, Moe had several love affairs, but each ended before it could really begin.

In Jersey City, Moe befriended William Klein, a businessman whose job required him to visit clients in their homes and offices. Moe liked to go with Klein on his rounds, often sitting in the car and waiting while Klein conducted business. Klein never knew when Moe would show up and he never asked him questions about himself. Klein was also



willing to pay for meals. Klein even bought Moe new clothes when he began to notice the ragged state into which Moe's suit would fall over time. In New York, Moe became a regular at professional ballgames. Moe was given a card allowing him access to all American League and National League stadiums. When Moe would go to the games, he would often sit in the press box where he befriended a great number of reporters. It was also there that Moe befriended a pediatric surgeon who would eventually repair an umbilical hernia Moe had had since he played baseball in the thirties.

During the years in which Moe traveled, appearing to be penniless and at the mercy of his friends and acquaintances, he was living with his unmarried brother Dr. Sam in Newark, New Jersey and later with his spinster sister. Dr. Sam took care of Moe, buying his clothes and providing a place for him to live. In the beginning, the relationship was strong and the brothers had many good times together. This did not last, however, as Dr. Sam gave in to the envy he had always harbored toward Moe and he grew to resent caring for Moe. In the late fifties, Moe began to suffer from what could have been a type of psychosis, but Dr. Sam failed to get him medical help beyond checking his blood for syphilis. However, when Dr. Sam had a heart attack in 1958, Moe spent the entire three weeks, minus two days, that Dr. Sam was in the hospital, sleeping in a nearby room, but never once went to speak to Dr. Sam. Finally, in 1964, Dr. Sam had had enough of his younger brother and moved to have him evicted. After his lawyer sent Moe two letters of eviction, Moe finally moved out. A short time later, Dr. Sam called his sister to give a message to Moe and learned that he had not moved in with her as he had said. For two years Dr. Sam would worry about Moe's whereabouts, enlisting the help of Sam Goudsmit, a friend of both Berg brothers, to help him find Moe. Eventually Dr. Sam would learn Moe had been with their sister, Ethel, the whole time.

Ethel Berg once wanted to be an actress, but eventually became a successful schoolteacher. Ethel was in love once, but when the romance ended badly, Ethel cut herself off from romantic relations and remained a spinster her entire life. In time, Ethel became a dark personality that caused her to become isolated and rumored to be a witch among the children of her neighborhood. Ethel was a wildly successful gardener, often growing things that should not have been able to survive in her area. Ethel adored her brother and was thrilled when he came to live with her, but wracked with jealousy when he did not offer to introduce her to some of his famous friends or include her in other special events.

While living with Ethel, Moe continued his travels and befriended many other people, including a small publisher. However, it was in Ethel's home that Moe was living when he began to show symptoms of the illness that would kill him. Like many older people, Moe suffered from sundowner's syndrome, in which he would wake in the night disoriented and frightened. One night in May of 1972, Moe woke in this state and fell out of bed, hitting his chest on a night table. Soon afterward Moe became ill, suffering stomach pains and an inability to eat. Moe was admitted to the hospital where doctors ran multiple tests and discovered too late that Moe had a ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm. Moe died on May 29, 1972, seconds after asking how the Mets were doing.



Dr. Sam would feel a great amount of guilt over the death of his brother, believing that if he had not been out of the country at the time he might have been able to save him. Dr. Sam also blamed the doctors treating Moe for his death. Ethel suspected that someone had poisoned her brother. After his death, Moe was cremated and buried in a Newark cemetery. However, some years later, Ethel took the ashes to Israel where she reburied them in a location she refused to tell anyone, including Dr. Sam.

Chapter 14. The Secret Life of Moe Berg. Moe Berg was a man who suffered from a lack of self-esteem. Moe often questioned whether or not people liked him, including a supervisor in the OSS who had lavished so much praise on Moe it should have been obvious how much the man loved him. The author suggests that Moe's lack of confidence came from a father who worked hard and criticized everything his children did, including the way in which Moe wrote letters home from Princeton. The author also suggests that Bernard Berg's attitude toward his Jewish heritage confused his children and left them uncertain of themselves. The author further suggests that Moe's odd behavior throughout his life, his need to remain mediocre in baseball and his deep love of a life of a spy, came from his need to hide his accomplishments and not stand out in a crowd. Moe needed to be anonymous. Perhaps this also explained Moe's refusal to work at a real job and to make use of his amazing education. The author points out similar behaviors in Moe's siblings, including their refusal to get along with one another and their battle over Moe's legacy after his death. Despite all this, the author suggests that Moe had an extraordinary life that was lived on his own terms.

In these chapters, the author chronicles the final two and half decades of Moe Berg's life. Moe refused to work after leaving the OSS, even as he attempted to get a permanent job with the CIA, the OSS's offspring. Moe lived a transient life, never settling down anywhere even though he technically lived with his brother Dr. Sam. Moe also never married, although he dated many women and showed a desire to have a child someday.

Moe's final days were filled with a transient behavior that resembled the way in which he worked during his days with the OSS, moving from place to place, not reporting to anyone. Moe never had any money; therefore, he lived off the kindness of others. Moe would repay this kindness by telling stories of his days in baseball and his time as a spy. In this way, Moe made a great many friends, but he also made a few enemies. Moe also had a few romances, but none of them ever took him far and none resulted in a lasting relationship.

In the end, the author analyzes Moe's relationship with his siblings, as well as their relationships to one another. While there appeared to be a great deal of affection between these siblings, they were often at odds with one another. Moe's brother and sister, Sam and Ethel, refused to speak to one another for thirty years, but Sam sat at Ethel's bedside when she was hospitalized after being found unconscious in her house. It was a complicated relationship that appears to have come from the behavior of their father, Bernard Berg. Bernard was an exacting man who had high expectations of his children that they were doomed to never achieve. This included with Bernard's feelings toward his religion left his children lonely, bitter people who would never marry or meet

their expectations. This attitude would mark Moe's life despite the heroic actions he took during World War II on behalf of the United States.



Characters

Morris 'Moe' Berg

Moe Berg was the last of three children born to Ukrainian immigrants. Moe's father owned a drug store where he was the druggist. Throughout his childhood, Moe knew his father as a tough, hardworking man who expected the best from his children. Although Jewish, Moe's father ignored his faith in favor of becoming more like his neighbors in the predominately Christian Newark neighborhood where he chose to raise his family.

Moe was highly intelligent and made good grades all through school. After graduating at seventeen, Moe attended New York University before transferring to Princeton University. While at Princeton, Moe suffered from some of the most intense intolerance he would ever experience due to his Jewish heritage. This hurt Moe deeply in part because he had grown up without religious guidance. For this reason, Moe embraced his heritage only when it seemed to benefit him.

After Princeton, where Moe was one of the best ballplayers the school would ever see, he joined a professional ball team as a shortstop. Moe would spend sixteen years playing in the major leagues as both a shortstop and later as a catcher. In this capacity, Moe would travel twice to Japan, two trips that would have an enormous impact on Moe's life. At the same time, Moe traveled to Paris, where he audited classes at the Sorbonne, and then attended law school at Columbia University, where he would graduate slightly late due to him failing a single class.

Moe would go on to become a coach in the major leagues and later a member of the OSS, the precursor to the CIA. As a part of the OSS, Moe had a major role in the American attempts to learn about and stop the development of the nuclear bomb in Germany. After the war, the OSS was disbanded and Moe resigned. Moe would spend multiple years attempting to secure a role within the CIA, but this would fail after a brief, disappointing contract with the agency. Moe would then spend the rest of his life as a transient, moving from place to place relying on the kindness of friends and acquaintances. Moe would die in May of 1972 of a ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm.

Bernard Berg

Bernard Berg was Moe Berg's father. Bernard Berg was a hardworking man who immigrated to the United States as a young man and quickly made his desired mark on his new country by first buying a laundry and later training to be a druggist and buying his own drug store. Bernard Berg was well known in his neighborhood where he was a reliable druggist.

Bernard Berg was a Jew, but he chose to turn his back on his heritage in order to fit in better in the mostly Christian neighborhood where he made his home. Bernard refused



to allow his family to speak or use Yiddish or Hebrew. However, Bernard made an exception when Moe expressed a desire to learn both languages.

Despite being a tough father figure who expected perfection from his children, Bernard had a gentle side that he showed quite often to his neighbors. Bernard was even the author of a romantic story that appeared to go directly against his often spoken disapproval of Moe's decision to be a professional ballplayer. The author of this book suspects that Bernard's tough expectations for his children damaged their self-esteem, leaving them uncertain in themselves and unable to sustain personal, romantic relationships.

Dr. Sam Berg

Dr. Sam Berg was the oldest son of Bernard and Rose Berg. Dr. Sam was always jealous of his younger brother, Moe, because he appeared to be the favorite of his parents. When Moe chose to pursue a baseball career despite their father's disapproval, Dr. Sam chose his father's side against his brother.

Moe often lived with his brother during the off-season in baseball and later after the war was over. Dr. Sam took care of Moe, buying his clothes, providing his food, and a room where Moe could keep his belongings, including the many newspapers he often read. Although the two brothers were close and had some good times together, Dr. Sam eventually came to resent Moe. In 1964, Dr. Sam evicted Moe from his home and spent several years unsure of where his younger brother was living or if he was safe. Eventually, Dr. Sam learned that Moe was living with their sister, Ethel, whom Dr. Sam had not spoken for more than thirty years.

After Moe's death, Dr. Sam openly blamed the doctors who treated him for his death. Dr. Sam later became involved in a book about his brother's life. Ethel was upset about this book and threatened to sue if her name was mentioned. Later, Ethel wrote and published her own book on Moe's life.

Ethel Berg

Ethel Berg was once a vivacious woman who wanted to be a movie star. However, Ethel settled down and became a teacher, a job at which she was hugely successful. Ethel had one romance when she was a young woman, which ended poorly. Ethel would remain single for the rest of her life as a result. As an older woman, Ethel became highly eccentric, causing the neighborhood children to become frightened of her, calling her a witch. However, Ethel was a wonderful gardener and was able to charm several men in the neighborhood to help her with her garden without requesting payment.

Moe moved in with Ethel after Dr. Sam evicted him from his home. Ethel was often jealous of Moe and his relationships with others, especially when he offered to do for others what he never offered to do for her. After Moe's death, Ethel claimed that he was poisoned by people he crossed during his time in the OSS. Ethel wrote a book about



Moe's life. Ethel also accepted the Medal of Freedom Moe refused to accept many years earlier.

Estella Huni

Estella Huni was the only woman Moe ever had a successful relationship with. Moe and Estella met in New York and Moe soon began to live with Estella. Moe introduced Estella to his siblings, but not to many of his friends. Moe and Estella appeared to have a strong relationship, but when Moe went to Europe during World War II, he failed to keep in touch with Estella. In time, Estella grew disenchanted with Moe and married another man.

William Donovan

William Donovan was the eccentric lawyer who Franklin D. Roosevelt asked to create a spy organization like the English MI-6. Donovan created the Office of Strategic Services, the OSS. Donovan was running the OSS on the fly; therefore, he was not as rigid with the agents under his service as later leaders would be. For this reason, agents who liked to work independently and disappear for weeks at a time were the type of agents Donovan liked to have around him. This created the perfect atmosphere for Moe Berg in the OSS. Donovan liked Moe a great deal and even went to see him in the field on several occasions. After the war, Truman disbanded the OSS and Donovan returned to the practice of law.

Marjory Sanger

Marjory Sanger was the daughter of a Baltimore Orioles lawyer Moe befriended in the latter part of his life. Marjory found Moe exhausting and did not like his frequent long stays with her and her husband. However, when Marjory's husband suddenly decided to divorce her, Moe became her saving grace, helping her get through the difficult time. However, when Marjory failed to recover from the divorce as quickly as Moe thought she should, he disappeared and she never saw him again.

Nelson Rockefeller

Nelson Rockefeller was the head of the OIAA in the early years of World War II and was the man who recruited Moe Berg to be a propaganda agent for the agency. Rockefeller sent Moe to South America where Moe shined as an agent focused on raising morale of the American troops stationed in the countries there as well as promoting good will with the local citizens. Moe and Rockefeller would become friends and remain so even after Rockefeller became governor of New York.



Werner Heisenberg

Werner Heisenberg was a German scientist during World War II. Heisenberg was rumored to be close to building a nuclear bomb for the German government. This was a worrisome situation for the Allied forces during the war, especially America, as they were also on the verge of creating such a bomb. The Americans became so concerned about Heisenberg that his kidnapping was urged by scientist and government officials alike. Despite intelligence from England and other nations that assured the Americans that Heisenberg was nowhere near perfecting the science to create an atomic bomb, the Americans became so worried that they plotted Heisenberg's assassination. Moe Berg was the second man asked to assassinate Heisenberg upon establishing his near completion of the bomb. Moe, however, decided Heisenberg was not close to building the bomb and did not assassinate him.

Babe Ruth

Babe Ruth was a famous baseball player in the twenties and thirties. Babe Ruth was part of a group of baseball players, that included Moe Berg, who traveled to Japan to engage in exhibition games with the Japanese ballplayers. Moe Berg would tell stories later in his life about how he convinced Babe Ruth that he had learned Japanese in less than two weeks.



Objects/Places

Books

Moe Berg was well read and would often buy books from used bookstores rather than borrow them from friends or libraries. Moe spent a great deal of time in bookstores late in his life where some of the bookstore owners would often give him books at no charge.

Newspapers

Moe would often buy dozens of newspapers and read them in the stretch of a single day. Moe would consider newspapers he had not finished reading alive and would not allow anyone to touch them. However, once Moe finished a paper it was considered dead and he would often leave it lying on the ground for anyone to touch.

Gun

Moe was given a gun shortly before he first traveled to Europe for the OSS. Moe continually dropped the gun into the lap of his neighbor because it would not remain in his pocket.

Lethal Cyanide Tablet

Moe was given a cyanide tablet to commit suicide with after he assassinated Werner Heisenberg. However, Moe found it unnecessary to kill Heisenberg.

Grey Suits

Moe had a small wardrobe that consisted of the same grey suits, white nylon shirts, and black ties. Moe would dress in this fashion most of his adult life, including his later years in which he clearly wore the same suit, shirt, and tie everyday while washing them out in the sink at night.

Trains

Moe often traveled by train while playing baseball. Later in life, Moe befriended a great many conductors and porters on trains who would allow him to travel on the trains for free.



Newark, New Jersey

Moe grew up in Newark, New Jersey. Both Moe's brother and sister would live in Newark their entire lives and Moe would live with both of them off and on throughout his adulthood.

Paris, France

Moe visited Paris shortly after his first season in the major leagues. While there, Moe audited classes at the famous Sorbonne University and visited many of the landmarks of the city.

Japan

Moe visited Japan twice during his time in baseball, once to teach Japanese players the game and once as part of an exhibition team that included Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. Moe was deeply fascinated with Japan and would continue to admire the people and their customs all his life, often wearing a kimono most mornings. Moe also took film of Japan during his second visit that he would later show to members of the OSS and claim were used in planning the Doolittle raids, although this is doubtful.

Princeton University

Moe attended Princeton University in New York, graduating top of his class in 1923. Moe also played baseball at Princeton where he garnered the interest of professional scouts sent to check out other players.

OSS

The OSS, or Office of Strategic Services, was a spy organization begun at the beginning of World War II to gather intelligence in the same manner as England's MI-6. The OSS would be disbanded after the war, morphed into the SSU, or Strategic Services Unit, and finally into the CIA.

OIAA

The OIAA, or Office of Inter-American Affairs, was an organization founded by Nelson Rockefeller that was designed to spread propaganda in South and Central America to keep the citizens of those countries on the side of the United States during World War II. Moe would work briefly for the OIAA before resigning and joining the OSS.



Themes

Low Self-Esteem

Moe Berg would always be mediocre. When he became a professional baseball player, Moe had the stuff to be a star, but he purposely sabotaged himself by returning late for spring training and performing badly and later by attending law school, a decision that forced him to miss whole sections of the regular season. Later, when Moe began to shine as a catcher, he injured his knee and caused himself to be permanently relegated to third stringer.

As a student, Moe shone. In baseball, Moe was known as Professor Moe because of his prestigious education and his talent with multiple languages. However, late in life when Moe could have made a fortune with his education doing any number of things, he chose to turn his back to a steady income and instead become a transient, living off of the kindness of friends and acquaintances.

The author analyzes Moe's odd behaviors throughout his life, taking the reader back to Moe's childhood. While none of the Berg children ever said anything unkind about their father, Bernard, the author theorizes that the Berg children were often criticized by their perfection-expecting father. As an example, the author offers the reader several letters in which Moe's father criticizes his son's letter writing skills and his performance at Princeton, as well as his desire to continue playing baseball. The letters make it clear that Bernard was free with criticism and that he was a tough task maker. This causes the author and the reader to come to the conclusion that Moe remained mediocre his entire life because he was afraid of standing out. It is this that makes low self-esteem a theme of Moe Berg's life.

Academic Study

Moe Berg was a lifelong student. Moe began his studies as a child in public school, but he quickly showed the world that he was highly intelligent. Moe continued his education at Princeton, where he shone both in the classroom and on the baseball field. Moe went to Paris and audited classes at the famous Sorbonne, and then attended law school at Columbia University. For the rest of his life, Moe would read everything he could get his hands on with the exception of fiction. Moe could often be seen reading huge tomes while traveling with his baseball teams throughout the United States, including books written in a variety of foreign languages.

Moe would be lauded as Professor Moe by a sports writer who was fascinated with Moe's education and his gift for languages. Throughout his sports career, Moe would be known for his eccentricities, including his love of books and his habit of reading dozens of newspapers a day. Moe even practiced law for a short time during the off season of baseball.



Moe was well educated, and when he became a spy, he quickly learned all he could about physics so that he could speak intelligently with the many scientists he was assigned to meet. Moe also learned Japanese for his two trips there, could converse with a doctor on the doctor's own level, and hold his own with just about any educated person he met. It is for this reason, academic study is a theme of Moe Berg's life.

Espionage

Moe Berg would become a spy during World War II. The writer of this book is unclear on Moe's reasons for choosing such a career, but feels that there is a strong connection between this action and the death of Moe's father on the day he quit baseball, a career his father deeply detested.

Moe would go to Europe during the war and be instrumental in meeting with multiple physicist and learning of the progress Germany was making with the building of their own nuclear weapon. Moe would also be instrumental in bringing Antonio Ferris, an aeronautical engineer, to America. Toward the end of the war, Moe would also be assigned to assassinate Werner Heisenberg, a leading German physicist, should he learn that the man was close to building his own nuclear weapon.

After the war, Moe was awarded the Medal of Freedom for his work in Europe for the OSS. However, when the OSS was disbanded, Moe found himself faced with higher expectations from his superiors. This caused Moe to quit the SSU, but he would spend several decades of the remaining years of his life attempting to receive a contract with the CIA. For this reason, espionage is a major theme of Moe Berg's life.

Style

Perspective

The author of this book, Nicholas Dawidoff, is a graduate of Harvard University. The author spent a year in Asia as a Henry Luce Scholar as well. The author has written multiple articles for publications such as Sports Illustrated and The American Scholar. The author shares with the subject of this book a love of both sports and academics.

The author comes to this novel with an objective perspective. The author did not know Moe Berg or any of his family members. However, he clearly has respect for Moe Berg and a fascination for the strange life Berg lived. The author presents his story with the objectiveness of a journalist, but occasionally makes comments that leave the reader with the belief that the author has a strong affection and an interest protecting the memory of Moe Berg.

Tone

The tone of this novel strives to be objective. The author attempts to give to the reader a well-rounded view of Moe Berg. The author of the book begins his story by giving the reader multiple views of the personality of Moe Berg by giving examples of what people who have known him or know of him think of him. The author then sketches Moe's life, focusing on his career in baseball and later skimming over his career as a spy during World War II. The author clearly is greatly interested in Moe's stats as a ballplayer.

The tone of the novel is that of an intelligent man writing about another intelligent man. The author presents Moe's life in detail, especially the nineteen years Moe spent in the major leagues. As the novel progresses and the author begins to deal with a period of Moe's life in which much of his behavior is bizarre and unexplainable, the author begins searching for reasons for Moe's actions, changing the tone from an objective one to more of a subjective one.

Structure

The book is divided into fourteen chapters and a prologue. The prologue is comprised of multiple anecdotes from people who knew or know of Moe Berg. The first nine chapters cover Moe's early life and his career in baseball. Chapters ten through twelve cover Moe's time with the OIAA and the OSS during World War II. Chapter thirteen is a comprehensive analysis of Moe's life in the final thirty years of his life as he attempted to get a contract with the CIA and then lived a transient life, living off the kindness of friends and acquaintances. Finally, the last chapter of the book is the most subjective. In the final chapter, the author attempts to explain Moe's odd life, his mediocre baseball career, his refusal to use his intelligence to get a good job, and his transient lifestyle in



the final years of his life. In this chapter, the author suggests Moe's relationship with his father had a strong impact on his need to remain anonymous.

The book tells a nearly complete story of one man's life. In the beginning, the author finds it difficult to tell of Moe's childhood because little is known about Moe's parents and their family life. The author skims over most of Moe's younger years, concentrating instead on his baseball career and his relationships with reporters during those years and later in his life. The author gives details of Moe's successes and failures as a ball player as well as his travels and his academic studies during this time in his life. However, Moe's later years were covered in secrecy and made even more difficult to decipher due to Moe's natural instincts to remain anonymous, to not stick out. For this reason, the author tends to skim over certain years of Moe's life simply because there is not enough information about those years. However, Moe's actions in the war are clear and the author gives him clear credit for all he did in support of the United States during World War II.



Quotes

"When Linda McCarthy, the CIA museum curator, talks about Moe Berg, her face flushes sanguine and her conversation comes in breathless, staccato surges. Moe Berg is her passion."

Prologue, p. 4

"John Keiran created the public Moe Berg."

Chap. 1, p. 11

"From the first, baseball made him very happy. Berg couldn't get enough of the game. He would spend a generous share of his life inside ballparks."

Chap. 2, p. 25

"The cumulative effect at the moment was that, even with the staggering number of courses he'd taken on, Berg had time on his hands. To fill it, he developed a habit he'd keep for the rest of his days: multiple newspapers."

Chap. 4, p. 46

"Shortstop Berg had always been too slow. Catchers, though, are notorious for trudging around the base paths, and Berg fit the essential criteria for the position: nimble reflexes, a strong arm, soft hands, and brains."

Chap. 5, p. 59

"Moe Berg had always been a loner, and as he receded to the fringes of professional baseball, his eccentricities became more pronounced. Nobody had ever really known much about him. Now he became obviously unusual, and it began to occur to some people to wonder."

Chap. 6, p. 68

"Life in this new place where even the mundane—beds, clothing, food—was unlike anything he'd seen before, immediately fascinated him much the way that Paris had."

Chap. 7, p. 79

"Sam Berg, who despaired over his talented brother, knew him well enough to shrug and say that 'he was happy in that he lived the life he loved.'"

Chap. 8, p. 124

"By Berg's account, the lobbying was so intense that one Rockefeller aide even came to the ballpark and went out to the bull pen where Berg was warming up Lefty Grove; Berg had to field job pitches between tosses from Grove."

Chap. 9, p. 128

"In late 1943, Horrigan and Berg were assigned to Project Larson, an OSS operation designed by OSS Chief of Special Projects John Shaheen, in which the stated purpose was to spirit Italian rocket and missile experts out of Italy by boat and bring them to the



U.S."

Chap. 10, p. 161

"Berg's assignment had been to look Heisenberg over. He was to fire only if he heard indisputable evidence that a German bomb was nearing completion. Berg wasn't exactly sure what he had heard, but it didn't seem terribly threatening, and nobody else seemed to find anything amiss either."

Chap. 11, pp. 204-205

"On May 29, 1972, he asked a nurse, 'How are the Mets doing today?' and died before she could answer. It was baseball to the last."

Chap. 13, p. 329



Topics for Discussion

Who is Moe Berg? What are the differing opinions of Moe Berg that are presented in the prologue? Why are there so many differing opinions of Moe? What made Moe stand out among the baseball players of his era? Why did the press focus so much on Moe, who, by all accounts, was a mediocre baseball player through most of his career? Why does the author chose to devote an entire chapter of the book discussing John Keiran's use of Moe in his sports column during Moe's career?

Why did Moe's father not allow Yiddish to be spoken in his home? How did this ignorance of his own religion impact Moe later in his life? How did Moe react to intolerance against him as it was presented at Princeton? How many other times in his life did Moe use or hide behind his religion? For what reason did Moe do this? Was Moe ever to embrace any kind of religion in his lifetime?

Why did Moe Berg become a professional baseball player despite his father's unhappiness with this decision? How much influence did Moe's father have over his decisions? Why did Moe go to Paris early in his baseball career? Why did Moe chose to go to law school so early in his baseball career? How did this impact his baseball career? How might Moe's career have been different if he had not attended law school and insisted on missing whole portions of the baseball season?

How did Moe make the move from shortstop to catcher? Was this a good career move for Moe? What injury sidelined Moe's career shortly after this? How long did Moe play the catcher position? What were his stats as a catcher? How did Moe make the move from player to coach? Why did Moe only coach for three years? What might have been different for Moe if he had continued to coach or went back to it after the war? Why did he not do that?

Who courted Moe for the OIAA? For what reason? Why did Moe finally join the OIAA? What did he do for the OIAA? Was Moe good at this kind of work? What did Moe do during this time period that would define his way of working when he joined the OSS? How did this method of working lead to Moe's dismissal from the CIA? For what reason?

What did Moe do for the OSS? Why did Moe introduce himself to so many Italian scientists? What did Moe want to learn from those scientists? What did he learn? Why was Moe told to attend a Heisenberg lecture? What was Moe supposed to learn from this lecture? What was Moe supposed to do if he learned the wrong thing during the lecture? Would Moe have done it? Why did he not do it? Was Moe right in his decision? How did Moe's superiors feel about his actions in Switzerland in this mission?

What marked the remainder of Moe's life? Why did he travel so much? Why did he not get a real job? Who paid Moe's way the rest of his life? For what reason? What did Moe do to earn his living? What was Moe's relationship like with his siblings? How did they treat Moe? Each other? Why did Moe's brother have him evicted? Where did Moe go then? How did Moe die? What was his last words? Why is this significant?