

The Hunt for Red October Study Guide

The Hunt for Red October by Tom Clancy

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Plot Summary

Set during the tense times of the Cold War, the daring defection of a top level Soviet submarine captain puts the whole world in danger. Jack Ryan, a CIA specialist, is called in to analyze the situation and help the United States (US) government avoid a military conflict that would disturb the balance of peace between the US and the Soviet Union (USSR). An intense exploration of the problematic peace between the two world powers, the novel keeps the reader in suspense as people at all levels, both military and civilian, race to avert a global nuclear crisis.

Captain Marko Ramius commands the Soviet flagship submarine, the Red October. Motivated by his wife's death due to Soviet incompetence, Ramius and his top officers plan to defect to the US. Ramius kills the political officer on board and tells the crew that their mission involves absolutely zero radio contact. The officers fool the crew with a fake radiation scare so that they will be ready and willing to leave the submarine when it is time to defect.

Ramius sends a letter to the Soviet Navy, informing them of his plans to defect. The Soviets send out all of their ships and submarines out to look for the Red October. This provokes the American and British militaries because of so many submarines and ships in the Atlantic Ocean. The American President meets with the Soviet ambassador, who claims that it is a rescue mission. The Americans offer to assist in the rescue mission as a way to stay in control of the situation. The American and Soviet naval vessels come to many close calls as they meet each other in the Atlantic. Jack Ryan, newly arrived from England, tells the President that the Red October is planning to defect. He advises the president to offer the defectors asylum.

One of the submarines that is chasing the Red October strains its engines and sinks. One sailor survives. While that sailor is being treated in a US Naval Hospital, the Soviets are worried that he will wake up and reveal that he is from the Red October. When he does wake up, he reveals he is from a different submarine, therefore letting both the Soviets and the Americans know that there is more than one missing submarine and that the Red October is still at large.

Skip Tyler develops a secret plan to take possession of the Red October while allowing the crew to return to the Soviet Union. They use a deep-sea rescue vehicle to take the crew off the submarine. Then they blow up a decoy submarine and tell the Soviets that the Red October was destroyed. The top officers of the Red October pilot the submarine to a secret port in the US. After they are safely in port, the officers, including Captain Ramius, are given new identities in the US while their submarine, the Red October, is analyzed by US military intelligence. Jack Ryan returns home to his family in England and the US avoids a military conflict with the USSR.



The First Day, Friday, 3 December

The First Day, Friday, 3 December Summary

Set during the tense times of the Cold War, the daring defection of a top level Soviet submarine captain puts the whole world in danger. Jack Ryan, a CIA specialist, is called in to analyze the situation and to help the US government avoid a military conflict that would disturb the balance of peace between the US and the USSR. An intense exploration of the problematic peace between the two world powers, the novel keeps the reader in suspense as people at all levels, both military and civilian, race to avert a global nuclear crisis.

Captain Ramius commands the nuclear submarine called the Red October. Ramius has a complicated relationship with Soviet life. His father was a Soviet hero during World War II, but Ramius was raised by his grandmother in Lithuania, a Soviet republic with a history of being resentful of Soviet occupation. Ramius's wife, Natalia, was recently killed in circumstances for which Ramius blames the Soviet government.

The Red October has orders to conduct training drills, but Ramius intends to lead the submarine out of Soviet waters, never to return. He kills Captain Putin, the political officer on deck, and pretends it is an accident. With Putin out of the way, Ramius gives his officers a new, false set of orders that include commands for no radio contact at all with other ships or the mainland.

The First Day, Friday, 3 December Analysis

The description of the Red October allows the reader a glimpse into the Soviet military system. The layout of the Red October focuses on the nuclear reactors and missiles. Personal quarters, especially for the regular sailors, are very cramped and not designed for comfort. This description foreshadows the comparisons to be made with the American and British made submarines and ships later in the novel. In addition to these physical differences, the reader is also drawn to the way that the sailors are treated and how the different military ranks relate to each other. There is a climate of distrust on the Red October. The sailors are untrained and generally dismissed by the officers. The officers also have a potential monitor in the political officer. Ramius's plans are made within this political framework. His first act, killing the political officer, Putin, shows the importance of political monitoring in the USSR.



The Second Day, Saturday, 4 December

The Second Day, Saturday, 4 December Summary

Ramius informs his staff that they will be taking an interesting mission. They will move silently through the Arctic, down the Atlantic coast of North America, and surface in Cuba. Meanwhile, the USS Bremerton, captained by Commander Wilson, is tracking the movements of the Red October. Ramius's letter to the Soviet Navy, detailing his plan to defect, is delayed another day due to the carelessness of the mail sorter. In England, Jack Ryan prepares the introduction to his biography of Fleet Admiral William Halsey and is about to set out for a planned trip to Washington. The Soviet submarine, the Konovalov, which was supposed to conduct training drills with the Red October, is waiting for the submarine to arrive.

The Second Day, Saturday, 4 December Analysis

Ramius's actions are beginning to be noticed by those who are supposed to interact or monitor the Red October. Both the Konovalov and the Bremerton show how ingrained the USSR naval organization is to all the sailors involved. The Bremerton does not imagine that the Red October would leave its normal circuit close to its port so it does not do anything special to track it. Similarly, the Konovalov assumes that the Red October is taking part in the scheduled training drill and is just difficult to detect. At the same time, at the post office the Soviet bureaucracy is shown again in a negative light, where the unhappy worker does not pay attention to his job and allows the important letter to fall on the floor, delaying its arrival.

Jack Ryan is introduced apart from the military exercises that are taking place. Instead, he is shown as an academic and family man, not interested or concerned about global events. He concentrates on military history, not the present circumstances of the military. This introduction of his character foreshadows his reluctance to participate in the military missions that he will be part of in the later chapters of the book.



The Third Day, Sunday, 5 December

The Third Day, Sunday, 5 December Summary

Ramius's childhood leads to his current opinions. As the son of the Party Leader of Lithuania, other children distrust him. His Lithuanian grandmother teaches him about religion. His youthful mentor, Sasha, teaches him to love the sea. Throughout his youth, he learns to pretend to be loyal to the Party in order to get what he wants. This leads to his quick advancement within the Soviet Navy, and the submarine corps. He meets Natalia, his wife. They are unable to have children, but have a very happy life together. Natalia develops appendicitis. The combination of a drunken surgeon and dodgy Soviet pharmaceuticals lead to her death. Ramius blames the Soviet system for her death. He studies the Red October as it is being built and selects those officers who he knows dislike the Soviet system to help him with his plan.

The Third Day, Sunday, 5 December Analysis

Ramius' gripes against the Soviet Union are explained in this chapter. In addition to providing a lifelong motive for Ramius to defect from the Soviet Union, it also paints a particularly negative image of the Soviet Union. Ramius's childhood sets the stage for the double life he will lead as an adult. The conflict between his Lithuanian heritage and his father's strong affiliation to the Communist Party not only define the young Ramius, but also helps him develop the skills necessary to succeed in a system that he hates. His wife's death is the culmination of many Soviet social problems. On the one hand, she is killed by the system of Party loyalty, which does not make individuals, such as the drunken doctor, responsible for their actions. On the other hand, the Soviet industrial bureaucracy provides her with fake medication that leads to her death from appendicitis, which is not generally a fatal condition in modern medicine.

The Fourth Day, Monday, 6 December

The Fourth Day, Monday, 6 December Summary

Jack Ryan reports to the CIA, meeting with Vice Admiral Greer. He has surveillance photographs of the Red October taken by British intelligence. He wants to trade these pictures for information about the American nuclear program. One issue with the photographs is that there is one showing a set of doors that they do not understand the purpose of. Ryan takes the pictures to his friend, Skip Tyler, who realizes that they are part of a silent propulsion system. Ryan insists on giving Tyler access to government computers in order to figure out more about the theoretical capabilities of this silent propulsion system.

The sonar surveillance system tracks all naval operations. They detect the USS Dallas, which is supposed to be silent. They also track the Konovalov, which has surfaced because it has not met the Red October for the scheduled training drill. The Americans are not worried because they think that the USS Bremerton is following the Red October.

The Fourth Day, Monday, 6 December Analysis

Jack Ryan's character develops further during his scheduled meeting with the CIA. His concern about buying the right Christmas presents for his daughter seems just as important to him as the serious military secrets that he discusses concerning British and American military intelligence photographs. This shows that Jack is just a normal man who is caught up in events beyond his own personal life.

The descriptions of the CIA offices are in contrast to those of Soviet meeting places. In addition to being very expensive looking, each office reflects the personality of the person who uses it. These personal touches give added information about the characters that is not available for their Soviet counterparts.



The Fifth Day, Tuesday, 7 December

The Fifth Day, Tuesday, 7 December Summary

On the USS Dallas, Jones, a computer genius, detects a sound on the sonar that he cannot identify. He picks up at least three different Russian submarines. The Dallas receives a coded message with a warning that some unknown Russian fleet activity is occurring. Jack Ryan is called to the CIA to interpret this message. The CIA is trying to determine the intent of the Soviet Navy. In addition, they know that all the Russian submarines have sped up in the North Atlantic. Jack Ryan is unconcerned about it and thinks it might just be a practice drill. He also suggests the idea that the Red October might be lost and that the Soviets are looking for it. Reconnaissance photographs taken that morning show the major Soviet fleet at port in Eastern Russia. Jack Ryan is asked to stay and help analyze the information.

The Fifth Day, Tuesday, 7 December Analysis

Like Jack Ryan, Jones is presented as a person who entered military life despite other plans. His experience with computers sets him apart from the other sailors. Jones's relationship with the sonar equipment is shown to be an art, not a science. The fact that Jones is only an enlisted man with no special rank contrasts with the men of his same position in the Soviet Navy. While the Soviet officers do not mix with the enlisted men, Jones and his captain, Mancuso, have a very personal as well as professional relationship and Mancuso counts on Jones to do some very important jobs. In the Soviet Navy, on the other hand, the enlisted men have limited training and very little personal contact with their officers.



The Sixth Day, Wednesday, 8 December

The Sixth Day, Wednesday, 8 December Summary

Jack Ryan enters CIA headquarters. He is shown a top secret WILLOW file that contains important information from the CARDINAL, a highly placed spy in the Soviet government. This file states that a letter was received from Captain Ramius and that all the Soviet missile submarines have been recalled. All the fleet has been assigned to hunt down the Red October and sink it. Ryan believes that the officers of the Red October are planning to defect. He goes to the White House to brief the President. Ryan has evidence of previous submarine defections among Soviet sailors. He recommends that the submarine be met and the defectors welcomed.

The President takes Ryan aside and explains the secretive nature of the new mission. Greer will fly to England to inform the British government. Ryan is assigned to go to the USS Kennedy, the largest ship that is readily available. The commander is informed of the approaching Red October and the pursuing Soviet Navy. Ryan is dressed in a Navy uniform and uses the code name, MAGI, as he sets out on the first phase of the mission, which is code-named MANDOLIN.

The Sixth Day, Wednesday, 8 December Analysis

This chapter shifts gears from military description to the world of international espionage. The spy, CARDINAL, is presumably very high up in the Soviet government and manages to give important information to the US government through a complicated network of spies. Through this spy, the US government learns that the Red October is trying to defect. Jack Ryan's role away shifts from military advisor when he is asked to become a spy himself in order to coordinate actions between the Americans and the British.



The Seventh Day, Thursday, 9 December

The Seventh Day, Thursday, 9 December Summary

Ryan and another high-ranking officer, Davenport, go to the USS Kennedy to inform the commander, Painter, about the Red October. They get help from the British HMS Invincible. On the Dallas, Jones and Mancuso figure out that the strange sound they have been listening to is a Russian submarine. They transmit this information by satellite. Headquarters gives Dallas permission to pursue the mystery submarine. The Konovalov has received its orders to hunt down the Red October and the captain intends to sink it.

Ryan arrives on the HMS Invincible and passes along the information to the senior officers. On the Red October, the doctor runs a standard test for radiation on the radiation badges on the crew. Many of the badges show strong radiation exposure. The crew checks for a radiation leak but cannot find anything. What the doctor does not know is that before the submarine left port, the officers had contaminated the badges with an x-ray machine.

The Seventh Day, Thursday, 9 December Analysis

In this chapter, the reader begins to have more information than any of the respective characters. The submarine that Jones and Mancuso detect is a mystery to them, but the reader recognizes that it is the Red October. For the characters, however, the mystery continues, as the Dallas abandons its previous mission in order to track the Red October and keep the US Navy informed about its whereabouts. The crew of the Dallas is unaware of the importance of the submarine that they are tracking.

On the Red October, another layer of Ramius's plan begins. Using the radiation badges, Ramius creates a situation to worry the crew so that they will not think too much about what is going on with the mission and the command of the submarine. This adds another layer of forethought to Ramius's plan and shows how he has thought out all the aspects of his defection. This craftiness on his part belies his ignorance of American technology. He assumes that because no Soviet submarine could track him, that no American one would be able to either. This is clearly not the case because the Dallas is already following the Red October.



The Eighth Day, Friday, 10 December

The Eighth Day, Friday, 10 December Summary

Jack Ryan wakes from an eighteen-hour nap on the HMS Invincible. The Russian fleet has advanced while the British-American effort is slowly coming together. The Russian ambassador meets with the President at the White House. The President warns him that he needs to explain the submarine situation as quickly as possible. The ambassador leaves and returns with the claim that the Russian fleet is in the middle of a rescue mission. Meanwhile, the CIA has learned that the CARDINAL might be compromised. Greer speaks with Tyler, who has finished the model for the submarine that they know now is the Red October. Tyler thinks of a plan for keeping the submarine itself while allowing the crew that does not want to defect to return home to Russia.

Out at sea, the USS Pogy is tracking two Soviet submarines. One of these submarines is the E.S. Politovskiy. The nuclear reactor on the E.S. Politovskiy has been strained by the race to outrun the Red October. The crew tries to surface, but it is too late. The nuclear reactor tears the ship apart and it sinks to the ocean floor, killing everyone.

The Eighth Day, Friday, 10 December Analysis

In one of the plot devices used throughout the novel, the reader is given hints about the plans to keep the Red October for further study after releasing the crew. However, the reader is kept in the dark about the actual steps that will be taken. At the same time, the reader is given valuable information about the CARDINAL. The knowledge that the CARDINAL is in the hospital for medical treatment will aid the reader in identifying him at a future stage in the novel.

The E.S. Politovskiy symbolizes the technical problems for the Soviet Navy. Like the Red October, it is dominated by a nuclear reactor and weapons systems, leaving the crew vulnerable. When the E.S. Politovskiy races to intercept the Red October, the engines are not strong enough to keep the submarine operable. Instead, the submarine is destroyed and everyone dies because the technology was not strong enough to complete the mission. The presence of the sunken E.S. Politovskiy adds another element of danger to the situation. It leads to the confusion, for the characters and occasionally for the reader, over which Soviet submarine is being described. Often characters will mistake the E.S. Politovskiy for the Red October.



The Ninth Day, Saturday, 11 December

The Ninth Day, Saturday, 11 December Summary

Tyler explains his plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On the Red October, the reactor scare continues, as the officers suggest sabotage. The USS New Jersey, a battleship, approaches the Soviet Navy and calculates the weapons and strategies to be employed against the enemy. Meanwhile, an underwater rescue vehicle is loaded onto an outgoing plane in North Carolina. A Soviet fighter pilot tries to sneak up on the Americans but is caught and sent back to his ship. The top members of the Politburo meet in a secret underground room. In this meeting, it is revealed that a spy, disguised as the cook, is on the Red October, ready to destroy the ship if something bad happened. At the White House, the President and the Russian ambassador meet. The President reveals that they have located a damaged Russian submarine and have managed to rescue one Russian sailor.

The Ninth Day, Saturday, 11 December Analysis

The elements of the US government plan to take the Red October are hinted at in this chapter. The underwater rescue vehicle comes into play, though the reader is unsure of its use in the plan. At the same time, the reader has a new mystery to contemplate. The conversations in the Politburo make the reader aware of the presence of a spy on the Red October as well as the idea that this spy would survive if the Red October were to be sunk. The information that a single sailor has been rescued from an unnamed Soviet submarine makes the reader wonder if this is the spy from the Red October, indicating that the Red October had been sunk.



The Tenth Day, Sunday, 12 December

The Tenth Day, Sunday, 12 December Summary

The Russian and the American ships are all locating each other on their various detection devices. All are unsure how to approach each other. Fighter planes from both sides are tracking each other over the ocean. All have their weapons prepared for attack. The American Tom Cats swerve overhead making a sound that makes a Russian pilot think that they are attacking. He fires his four missiles at the American planes. One of the missiles nicks the lead American plane, but does not destroy it.

At the Naval Hospital, the rescued Russian sailor is in critical condition and cannot be identified except to say that he was a cook on the ship. An old submarine, the Ethan Allen, is filled with explosives as it goes out on its final mission.

The Tenth Day, Sunday, 12 December Analysis

The situation at sea is becoming critical, as the Soviet and the American-British military forces begin to meet each other. There are minor incidents that upset everyone. There is the possibility that someone involved will lose their temper and begin a real battle. Everyone is tense and worried about this situation, yet no one on any of the ships or planes knows the full story of what is going on.

The suspense continues about the rescued sailor. He is identified as the cook on the unnamed submarine. At the same time, the reader has learned no new information about the Red October, so the possibility still exists that the Red October has been destroyed and that the wounded sailor is responsible for it. Despite this, however, the reader gains more clues about the US government's plans for the Red October that involve an old submarine, the Ethan Allen. It is clear that the Ethan Allen is going to be destroyed, but it is not yet clear how it relates to the secret plan.



The Eleventh Day, Monday, 13 December

The Eleventh Day, Monday, 13 December Summary

The Air Force Reserve assembles to face the Soviet Navy, if only as a scare tactic. On the Soviet ship, the Kirov, the officers decide to stop all aggressive maneuvers to avoid a conflict with the Americans and continue on their mission to find the missing submarine. On the USS Dallas, Jones has spent the last two days tracking the mystery submarine. He locates the signal of the ship coming towards them.

Still on the HMS Invincible, Jack Ryan has leisure time to read a psychological report of defectors. At the Naval Hospital, Dr. Tait and Dr. Jameson have ruled out radiation exposure and see some improvement in their mystery patient. The KGB officer assigned to watch the patient almost lights a cigarette near the oxygen tanks and the doctors worry that the Soviets do not want the patient to survive. On the Red October, they continue to search for the radiation leak. The chief engineer locates a small one. He seals it and warns the junior officers to watch the crew closely to avoid future sabotage.

The Eleventh Day, Monday, 13 December Analysis

At the Naval Hospital, the contrast between the Americans and the Soviets is at the forefront. The KGB officer who lights the cigarette has assumed that the "No Smoking" signs posted in the hallway are not serious and almost blows up the building. The doctors are shocked that this man is not aware of the danger of smoking near oxygen tanks. This shows the lack of education on the part of the KGB officer, as well as heightening the American suspicions that this patient is not supposed to survive. The hints that the KGB officer and Russian doctor give indicate that they believe the sailor is from the Red October.

At the same time, the reader is reassured that Red October has not been destroyed. The radiation scare on the submarine continues. The involvement of the chief engineer confirms that the officers on the Red October are involved in the deception. The radiation scare allows the officers to keep the crew out of many crucial areas on the submarine, which allows the officers to direct the submarine as they choose without arousing the suspicions of the crew.



The Twelfth Day, Tuesday, 14 December

The Twelfth Day, Tuesday, 14 December Summary

The USS Dallas locks on the Red October. The Red October is using a monitoring turn to keep any ships at a distance. The Dallas is unsure that the Red October knows that they are there. They send the information they have back to headquarters. At the Pentagon, they decide that the Soviet Navy intends to trap the Red October using one of the submarines guarding the available ports. They decide to use the HMS Invincible to track the Red October, while pretending that the ship is returning to England. They need to warn the Red October not to approach the port. They want to find the submarine before the Soviets do so that they can use their secret plan to keep the submarine itself. Ryan, on the HMS Invincible, gets permission to try an idea. The Dallas surfaces to communicate.

In Moscow, Filitov of the Ministry of Defense has just returned from the hospital. His boss, the Defense Minister, reveals the secret spy on board the Red October. Filitov goes to the public baths on the pretext of his health.

The Twelfth Day, Tuesday, 14 December Analysis

The identity of the CARDINAL is revealed as a high level member of the Ministry of Defense. Filitov learns the secret about the spy on the Red October. His methods of communicating with the US government show some of the problems with the Soviet system. On the one hand, while the Soviets are shown to be distrustful of the masses, they are trusting of their close friends, leaking information that they should not, simply to show their own power. On the other hand, the privileges of the high officials keep them from the places where other people gather. Filitov's network of spies uses a regular public bathhouse as a way to communicate information.



The Thirteenth Day, Wednesday, 15 December

The Thirteenth Day, Wednesday, 15 December Summary

The USS Dallas intentionally allows the Red October to detect it. The Red October rises in order to get a better look at the surrounding area. When the Red October surfaces, the HMS Invincible sends a message to the Red October, explaining that they are being chased. The Red October agrees to meet the HMS Invincible. Ryan sends back the coded message to the White House. The Deep Sea Rescue Vehicle, the Avalon, pulls away from the wreckage of the E.S. Politovskiy and goes to the same place that the Red October and the HMS Invincible have agreed to meet.

In Washington, they give the Senate Intelligence Committee a false story about the submarines. This leads to the arrest of a senior congressional aide, Henderson, on charges of espionage. On the Red October, there continue to be more problems with the reactor. The submarine surfaces to vent the reactor and the officers continue working on the problem.

The Thirteenth Day, Wednesday, 15 December Analysis

At this point, all the pieces of the plan are shown to the reader. The only thing missing is how they all relate to each other. The Avalon, the Red October, and the HMS Invincible all arrange a meeting place to carry out their plans. The radiation scare on the Red October proves to be a great way to make the crew understand why the submarine surfaces or communicates in an unusual way.

Ramius's surprise at being detected shows that his knowledge of Soviet military technology is not adequate in regards to the American technology. This is the only real problem that has been presented in his plans. Because it is based on knowledge he could not know, it shows both the secrecy of the Soviet military as well as the inferiority of their technology.



The Fourteenth Day, Thursday, 16 December

The Fourteenth Day, Thursday, 16 December Summary

A group of intelligence officers is sent to the HMS Invincible to examine the Red October. During their descent to the HMS Invincible, their helicopter crashes and kills all of them. The rescue team recovers their mission orders. Jack Ryan and a British officer, Owen Williams, take over the mission. The various pieces of the plan, including the Ethan Allen and the Avalon, gather at the meeting point.

The plan is finally revealed. The crew that do not want to defect are taken off the ship. The decoy ship, the Ethan Allen, is exploded and identified as the Red October. The defectors take the Red October to a safe place in the US. On the Red October, Ramius tells the crew that the ship is damaged and must be abandoned. The crew will leave on an American rescue boat and the officers will stay on the ship and destroy it. Ryan and Williams board the Red October and begin the crew evacuations. The suspect cook sneaks away during the evacuation. Ryan explains the plan to Ramius, Ryan hears two shots fired and finds Williams and a Russian officer shot by the secret agent. Ryan shoots and kills the spy. Ramius is wounded nearby. The Ethan Allen explodes as planned.

The FBI and CIA explain to Senator Donaldson that his aide, Henderson, is a KGB spy. They intend to use Henderson as a double agent against the Soviets. At the White House, they discuss their future plans for Henderson. The mystery sailor awakes and reveals that he is from the E.S. Politovskiy. The CARDINAL's message about the secret agent on the Red October comes through.

The Fourteenth Day, Thursday, 16 December Analysis

Jack Ryan is again put in a position that he did not ask for. This strengthens the idea that his character is not part of the international spy game but is often called upon because of his intelligence and patriotism. The secret plan is finally explained. The radiation scare allows the Red October to be evacuated very quickly.

The mystery of the secret spy on the Red October is solved on multiple levels. First, he is identified on the ship when he sneaks out of the evacuation line and kills or wounds those on board. Second, the message from the CARDINAL arrives confirming his presence. Third, the patient in the Naval Hospital wakes up and states that he is the cook from the E.S. Politovskiy, not the Red October.



The Fifteenth Day, Friday, 17 December

The Fifteenth Day, Friday, 17 December Summary

The Red October is led to safety. The USS Dallas sends medical assistance. Jones and Mancuso work to repair some of the equipment. Food and equipment is brought over from the Dallas. A Russian military official is taken out to the site of the Ethan Allen and is convinced that it is the Red October. The doctor heals Williams and Ramius. The Russians and Americans bond over videos. In Moscow, the Politburo discusses the outcome of the Red October situation. They come to an agreement where they all keep their positions while undertaking a political makeover of the military.

The Fifteenth Day, Friday, 17 December Analysis

The introduction of Jones and Mancuso from the Dallas allows the Soviets and Americans to meet and evaluate each other. The Americans explore the submarine and note all the differences between it and an American submarine, particularly when it comes to the comfort of the crew. The discussions of food and entertainment show the huge difference between life on the Soviet submarine and life on the American counterpart. At the same time, the Soviets are shocked by the talents of an enlisted sailor, Jones, in taking charge of complicated equipment and having a wide range of knowledge about electronics. This is very different from how their own enlisted men are trained and treated in the Soviet military.



The Sixteenth Day, Saturday, 18 December

The Sixteenth Day, Saturday, 18 December Summary

The crew of the Red October are transported to Washington. They are amazed by the things they see around them. The Americans tell each of them that they have an opportunity to defect if they wish. In Washington, the Russian ambassador accuses the Americans of trying to kidnap the crew. The President argues that the presence of the nuclear submarine is a violation of an agreement between the two countries. After he leaves, the President discusses the alternatives of the Soviets, including the need to believe the false stories planted by Henderson.

In Russia, a weather station detects something odd at sea that they suspect is a submarine. The New Jersey reports that the Russian fleet is returning home. The remaining crew from the Red October are interrogated during a special flight home to Moscow. The defectors are healing with the crew of the Dallas. They are getting ready to adjust to their new lives.

The Sixteenth Day, Saturday, 18 December Analysis

Both the crew that decides to return to the USSR and the officers that have defected are adjusting to American life. They are very impressed by the differences between the Soviet Union and the United States. The military crisis is averted, and the Soviet submarines and ships return to their home ports. One submarine, the Konovalov, stays behind, lost in the confusion, in order to monitor what is going on along the American coast. The presence of this submarine complicates the plans of the US government for the Red October, though only the reader is aware of it at this time.



The Seventeenth Day, Sunday, 19 December

The Seventeenth Day, Sunday, 19 December Summary

The Red October is escorted out. The Russian submarine, the Konovalov, is ordered to stay behind and observe the escort, not suspecting that the Red October is involved. On the Red October, the Russians and Americans are learning about each other, with the Americans helping the Russians adjust. The Konovalov goes after the submarines. The three ships, the Pogy, the Dallas, and the Red October, pick it up on their sonar. The Konovalov recognizes the Red October by its distinctive sounds. The captain decides that they need to destroy the Red October as soon as possible. They fire two missiles at the Red October. All three ships take evasive maneuvers. One missile hits at an angle. The explosion causes massive damage but does not destroy it.

The Red October and the Dallas attempt to confuse the Konovalov but the Konovalov identifies the Red October and fires another torpedo. The torpedo cannot ignite close to its own boat. It hits the Red October but does not ignite. The Red October slams into the Konovalov, breaking its hull. The Red October and the Dallas surface to look at the damage. They decide they can still make it to their secret port in Norfolk.

The Seventeenth Day, Sunday, 19 December Analysis

The Red October and the Dallas must work together to avoid the torpedoes of the Konovalov. In this way, the Soviet and American sailors learn to work together toward a common goal. Again, Jack Ryan assumes a role he is not prepared for and is wildly successful at it. The destruction of the Konovalov means that the plan for the Red October will be able to be completed successfully and that the Soviets will never learn about the defections or the possession of the Red October by US intelligence.

The Eighteenth Day, Monday, 20 December

The Eighteenth Day, Monday, 20 December Summary

The Red October makes it to Norfolk without further incident. On arrival, everyone splits up and returns to their normal lives. Jack Ryan flies home to his family in London.

The Eighteenth Day, Monday, 20 December Analysis

This chapter sums up the events of the novel, ending in the return of Jack Ryan to his personal life in London. Jack Ryan's character is shown to be more concerned with the personal side of life, particularly spending Christmas with his wife and children, than in the near crisis that he helped to avoid.



Characters

Jack Ryan

Jack Ryan is an analyst for the CIA who lives in London with his wife and children. Though his training is in economics and history, he is often called in to consult the American and British governments about international military matters, particularly relating to the Soviet Union. Jack does not have extensive military training but he is often involved in secret military operations. His involvement with the Red October begins when he shows the surveillance photographs taken of the submarine by British intelligence. Jack is personally connected to most of the vital characters in the novel, including many of the British and American military and intelligence communities, as well as the computer genius, Skip Tyler. These personal connections allow him to act as messenger for very important missions.

Jack's concerns for his safety and the welfare of the United States are balanced by his concern for his personal life. A lot of his time and attention are directed toward buying Christmas presents for his daughter as well as other domestic issues relating to his wife. His relationship with the British military is based completely on the relationship between his wife and the wife of a military commander. These relationships are always explored as a means of showing the personal side of Jack Ryan, as opposed to the professional side that works for the CIA and the military.

Ramius

Marko Ramius is a submarine captain in the Soviet Navy. Born and raised in Lithuania under the occupation of the Soviets, Ramius has always had a problematic relationship to the Soviet system, including his father, an influential member of the Communist Party and the head of the Party in Lithuania. Ramius' childhood provided him with many examples of anti - Communist thought, including his grandmother's religious teachings as well as the free spirit of his sea faring mentor. Ramius's decision to seek a career at sea shows his determination to avoid being controlled by the Communist Party. At the same time, though, he learns to conceal his displeasure with the Soviet Union by always presenting a positive political appearance in public.

The death of Ramius's wife through Soviet incompetence prompts Ramius to defect from the Soviet Union. His connections in the Soviet Navy allow him to pick his own officers and to learn about the full capabilities of his new submarine, the Red October. The conspiracy of Ramius and his officers leads the Red October on a mission to defect to the United States and involves the military forces of the Soviet Union, the US, and the British. Ramius and his officers manage to successfully defect to the United States through the assistance of Jack Ryan, the CIA, and the US Navy.



The President

The President is not names in the novel, allowing him to stand for a series of US presidents. Before becoming President, he worked as a trial lawyer, and is very skilled in playing the diplomatic role. His meetings with Jack Ryan are brief, in which Jack explains the situation and possible solutions. The President is also involved in keeping the US intelligence community on track. He exposes the KGB spy, Henderson, who is working as a Congressional aide. He also manages to keep the Soviet ambassador from learning about the plans for the Red October.

Jones

Jones is a computer specialist who enjoys classical music. After being expelled from college, Jones joins the Navy and spends three years learning sonar equipment. While on the USS Dallas, Jones is able to detect the Red October before anyone else is able to. Using his technical expertise, Jones tracks the Red October and eventually examines all the sonar equipment on the Soviet submarine.

Mancuso

Mancuso is the young captain of the USS Dallas. He works with his sonar specialist, Jones, to track the Red October. Mancuso takes the risk of asking headquarters to let him abandon his mission in order to track the Red October. Mancuso is skilled in evading detection by the Red October as he tracks the submarine across the sea. When the Dallas and the Red October join forces, Mancuso works hard to impress the Soviet officers with food and equipment from his submarine.

Vice Admiral Greer

Vice Admiral Greer is Jack Ryan's connection in the CIA. Greer is one of the highest-ranking members of the CIA and has access to top-secret information, including the file of CARDINAL. He shares this information with Ryan and coordinates the secret plans to take the Red October.

CARDINAL

CARDINAL is the code name of a high placed spy working for the CIA. CARDINAL is revealed as Filitov, a member of the Ministry of Defense in Moscow. Some bad health puts CARDINAL in the hospital, which worries everyone in the spy network. CARDINAL learns that there is a spy disguised as the cook on the Red October. He passes this information through his network of contacts but the message does not arrive in time.



Skip Tyler

Before he was injured in a car accident, Skip Tyler worked in the US Navy. His injury forces him to accept a job teaching engineering at the university level. Jack Ryan comes to Skip with the surveillance pictures of the Red October. Skip identifies the mystery doors as part of a silent propulsion system. Jack helps him secure time on government computers in order to construct a model of what the Red October is capable of. After accomplishing this mission, Skip comes up with a plan for taking the Red October without the Soviets knowing about it. He devises a plan in which a decoy submarine is destroyed in place of the Red October, thereby allowing the Red October to be taken to a secret port for analysis by the US military.

Dr. Tait

Dr. Tait is a Mormon doctor put in charge of the Naval Hospital. He has never been involved in diplomatic or political events before and is very nervous when a mystery patient from a Soviet submarine is brought in. Dr. Tait heals the patient while keeping a close eye on the KGB officers that have been stationed with the patient. Dr. Tait suspects that the Soviets do not want this patient to recover. He also uncovers hints that the patient is related to a nuclear submarine that the Soviets are trying to hide.

Tupolev

Tupolev is a former student of Ramius. He is captain of the Konovalov, the Soviet submarine scheduled to perform training drills with the Red October. Tupolev is determined to defeat his former teacher in the training drills. When the Red October does not show up, Tupolev takes the Konovalov on the search mission to find the Red October. After the crisis has been resolved, Tupolev is ordered to remain behind in order to monitor American naval activity. He discovers that the Red October has not been destroyed. He decides that he must destroy the Red October rather than let it fall into enemy hands. In the process, Tupolev and the Konovalov crew are killed.

Admiral Davenport

Admiral Davenport commands the British ship, the HMS Invincible. He and Jack Ryan are old friends who have often gone hunting together in England. Their frequent conversations are generally not about military matters. Instead, they discuss their wives and the various social activities that they have both participated in.



Objects/Places

The Red October

The Red October is a Soviet nuclear submarine with a new experimental silent propulsion system that enables it to travel undetected by other submarines. It is named for the October Revolution that led to the creation of the Soviet Union in 1917. Captain Ramius is involved in all aspects of the construction of this submarine in order to use it to defect to the US. The crew from the Red October is evacuated, believing that there is a radiation problem on board. The officers stay behind. When a decoy submarine, the Ethan Allen, is destroyed, the US claims that it is the Red October and that the officers of the Red October have been killed. In reality, the Red October is taken to a secret port in Norfolk, Virginia, in order to be analyzed by the US military.

The HMS Invincible

The HMS Invincible is a British ship commanded by Admiral Davenport. The HMS stands for Her Majesty's Ship, showing that it belongs to the British navy. The HMS Invincible is the surface connection in the elaborate plan to take the Red October. Jack Ryan and a Russian-speaking officer from the HMS Invincible are the first non-Soviets to see the inside of the Red October.

The USS Dallas

The USS Dallas is an American submarine doing routine surveillance in the Northern Atlantic. The USS stands for United States' Ship, showing that it belongs to the American navy. When the sonar technician, Jones, detects a mystery submarine, the USS Dallas changes its mission in order to track the submarine. This submarine is eventually identified as the Red October. The Dallas and the Red October join together to get the Red October into safety in Norfolk.

The Pentagon

The Pentagon is the center of military operations in the United States. It is located in Washington, DC. Most of the novel's activity takes place in the E-ring, or the outer most ring of the Pentagon complex.

Naval Hospital

Dr. Tait treats a mystery Soviet sailor who is rescued from a sunken Soviet submarine. At first, many believe that the sailor is from the Red October, but he turns out to be from the E.S. Politovskiy.



The E.S. Politovskiy

The E.S. Politovskiy is a Soviet submarine. When the Red October goes missing, the E.S. Politovskiy is sent to find it. The E.S. Politovskiy pushes its engines to full power in order to race as fast as it can. This is too much strain on the engine. The submarine tips over and all the crew are killed except one sailor who is rescued by the Americans. This sailor is taken to the Naval Hospital. No one is sure if he is from the Red October.

The Pogy

The Pogy is an American surface ship that leads the Red October and the Dallas to the port in Norfolk.

Politburo

The Politburo is the elite council that governs the Soviet Union. They meet in a secret room near the Kremlin in order to discuss the situations that affect their nation. The members of the Politburo fight against each other for power.

The Kremlin

The Kremlin is the medieval fortress that is the traditional place of government for Russia. The government of the Soviet Union meets here and all the offices of important members of the Communist Party and the government of the Soviet Union work here. The Minister of Defense and his assistant, Filitov, have offices in the Kremlin.

The KGB

The KGB is the Russian abbreviation for the State Security Committee. Similar to the CIA, it gathers secret intelligence both in the Soviet Union and outside the Soviet Union. It monitored internal problems in the Soviet Union, including looking into the personal lives of citizens to collect information about their loyalty to the Soviet Union.

The Konovalov

The Konovalov is a Soviet submarine. Originally, the Konovalov was assigned to conduct training drills with the Red October. When the Red October does not show up for the drills, the Konovalov joins the entire Soviet navy in the search for the Red October. After the crisis is ended, the Konovalov stays behind in order to gather more information about the American navy. It detects the Red October and attempts to destroy it. However, the Konovalov is destroyed in a joint effort between the Red October and the Dallas.



The Communist Party

The Communist Party is the only political party of the Soviet Union. Membership in the Party is necessary for success in the Soviet Union. Almost all of the characters from the Soviet Union are members of the Communist Party. Acceptance for membership is often seen as a rite of passage for young Soviets as they become adults. Ramius's father was the head of the Communist Party in Lithuania, making him the most powerful man in Lithuania and assuring his son's future in the Soviet system.

Silent Propulsion System

The Red October is equipped with a Silent Propulsion System. Using this system, the Red October can pass undetected by other submarines. Using the system, however, means that the Red October cannot move very fast. The system does not work as well as it is supposed to. Jones, the sonar technician on the Dallas, is able to detect the Red October and track it.

Defector

A defector chooses to leave their home country for political reasons. Unlike a refugee, a defector usually has information or is in a high position that makes him or her valuable to the other side.

The USSR

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, otherwise known as the Soviet Union, existed between 1922 and 1991 as a one-party state controlled by the Communist Party. At its height, it included 15 Soviet Socialist Republics, including Lithuania.

Lithuania

Ramius was born and raised here. After World War II, The Soviet Union took over Lithuania and made it part of the USSR. Lithuania has a long-standing independence movement that is repressed under the USSR.

The Cold War

The Cold War refers to the heightened military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that began after World War II. Because war was never officially declared and no battles were officially fought between the two nations, it was a "Cold" war instead of a "Hot" one.



Social Concerns

The plot of *The Hunt for Red October* may focus on the attempt of a Soviet submarine captain and his officers to defect to the United States, but the reasons for the defection are social, not military. The motivations of characters and their interactions with each other are founded in Clancy's perceptions of Soviet and American societies. Marko Ramius, captain of the Russian submarine *Red October*, is a carefully drawn character. He is Lithuanian and the son of a powerful Communist Party leader.

Much of his rise to his role as the Soviet Union's premier expert on submarine warfare has been based on his father's influence. Far from being grateful to his father and the Party, Ramius is troubled and angry. He is tormented by the memory of the time he told his father of the dissenting views of a schoolmate's father and of how that unfortunate man subsequently disappeared forever. His classmates shunned him as a snitch; as he grew up, he was denied comfort in the Roman Catholic church because the Communist Party brutally suppressed religious practices. To Ramius, his father was responsible for the suppression of Lithuanian culture, and he felt that he shared his father's guilt.

The Soviet Union is portrayed as an unhappy society in which variety of opinion and culture is impermissible.

"Marxism-Leninism was a jealous god," writes Clancy, "tolerating no competing loyalties." Competence is usually determined by party loyalty, not proficiency in one's job. As a consequence, a drunken surgeon butchers Ramius's beloved wife and yet is protected from punishment by bureaucrats in the Communist Party. Ramius is very good at designing and running submarines; his skill is threatening to Party functionaries. When he takes the new supersubmarine *Red October* out for a trial shakedown voyage, he knows it may be his last trip because Party officials may not give him another command; this knowledge, his bitterness over his wife's death, and his guilt from his childhood inspire him to plot to turn over the *Red October*, replete with nuclear ballistic missiles, to the United States.

America, in contrast, is a cocky society whose military men are proud of the country and their military hardware. Ramius had chosen a naval career to escape from the day-to-day strictures of his society; Americans such as Bart Mancuso, captain of the attack submarine *Dallas*, chose naval careers not only for adventure, but to serve their country by defending it.

Even CIA agents, often portrayed in American fiction of the 1970s and 1980s as connivers who subvert the law for their own ends, are shown to be good people who battle to keep foreign enemies from harming the United States.

In America, a free society inspires loyalty and pride in people ranging from CIA agents to pilots for the National Guard. America's principal problems in *The Hunt for Red October* are greedy traitors and fools who fail to recognize the dangers posed by



Communism. A free society's risk is that some citizens will take advantage of freedom to pursue their own interests, even if they weaken the society's defenses.

America's open society produces independent thinkers; although their freedom to think for themselves can be advantageous, a few American servicemen come dangerously close to disobeying orders and possibly starting a war. Russia's closed society produces obedient people whose adherence to rules inhibits their ability to respond to surprises; nonetheless, the Russian commitment to duty makes them relentless and dangerous foes. Much of the confrontation between the Soviet and American navies is a playing out of the advantages and disadvantages that each society has endowed to the characters of its military men. Even so, Clancy's views of the relative merits of each society are made clear by his focusing on Marko Ramius, a man tormented by his society. If the novel is to have a moral victory, then the Soviet Union must lose, because it crushes the spirits of even its best men.

Techniques

Clancy is a first-rate storyteller. He creates interesting characters, involves them in interesting events, and fills his plot with surprises and inventive challenges. In writing *The Hunt for Red October*, Clancy had two major difficulties to overcome. The first was the large number of characters and settings that his tale required; readers can quickly lose interest if they cannot keep track of the characters. The other difficulty was how to present all the technological information without bogging down the plot in technical details.

He solves the first problem by first sketching characters with bold images.

The novel begins with its strongest character, Marko Ramius. By the end of the first page, Ramius is shown to be a "Captain First Rank" in the Soviet Navy who is a keen observer of his Arctic surroundings. By the end of "The First Day," Ramius has been given a bold outline: He is thoughtful and strong-willed and has a tragic past.

Jack Ryan is similarly highlighted when first introduced. In less than a page, he is shown to be a scholarly family man and an unlikely hero. Not only are characters presented in sharp images, but they are given interesting problems to overcome. Thus readers can become interested in the exploits of several characters because each is clearly defined and active in the events of the novel.

The realistic portrayals of characters help humanize the technology. They are the focus of the story, and technology is not presented in long paragraphs of detailed explanation, a danger in a plot that is dependent on technology for its exciting situations. The technical information is blended in with the actions of the characters. For instance, the capabilities of the sonar for the U.S.S. *Dallas* are revealed through the reactions of Sonarman Second Class Ronald Jones, who on hearing the strange propulsion system of *Red October* for the first time says, "It's not screw sounds, not whales or fish. More likely water going through a pipe." In just a couple of lines, Clancy reveals that the sonar is so acute that it can even identify fish, and at the same time the plot is moved forward because Jones has heard the elusive *Red October*, and the Americans can now join the chase.

Themes

The contrast between Soviet and American societies as exemplified by their militaries is a major theme of *The Hunt for Red October*, but it is not the only one. Another significant theme that is played out on several levels of the novel is that of betrayal. When the story begins, Marko Ramius has already completed his plans to betray his government. He is motivated by his hatred for the communist system, by disgust at its treatment of his countrymen, the Lithuanians, and by a desire to punish the Soviet government. A tightly self-controlled man, he does not lash out at those who have hurt him but instead determines how best to harm his government and then schemes for months to put his fellow conspirators in the right places for success.

Ramius's betrayal is a calculated response to a cruel and stifling society. It is a gesture of independence.

Betrayals can take several forms.

Some can be coolly calculated, like that of Ramius. Others can be routine, like the reports of naval "political officers" who reveal to the Communist Party the deviations from doctrine of their shipmates. Others can be the products of foolishness, as in the case of Peter Henderson, aide to a powerful U.S.

Senator who has often given the CIA trouble. Dismayed by the shootings of student protesters at Kent State and the bombing of Cambodia during the Vietnam War, Henderson gave Soviet KGB agents some information. As a CIA agent put it, the KGB "offers the hook, and he nibbled at it. A few years later, of course, they stuck the hook nice and hard and he couldn't get away." Henderson's treason betrayed American foreign agents, resulting in their deaths; the CIA not only traps him but uses his betrayal to force the senator into retirement.

Betrayals and deceptions throughout *The Hunt for Red October* create suspense because almost anyone could be a spy — even a ship's cook — and because no one can be sure others are telling the truth. For instance, even as he announces his betrayal, Ramius lies by declaring that he is sailing for New York City, although he intends to sail for another port. Lies within lies and betrayals within betrayals give the novel a consistent air of suspenseful uncertainty until its climax. Another important theme is that of advanced technology. The social theme provides motivations for characters. The theme of betrayal reveals how the characters go about their business. The theme of technology reveals what the characters can and cannot do; advanced technology at once enables characters to pursue their goals and limits their options.

Nearly everyone in *The Hunt for Red October* is dependent on technology.

Ramius counts on his submarine's new quiet propulsion system to enable him to evade pursuers; Viktor Tupolev and other commanders of Russian Alfa-class attack submarines count on their superior speed to enable them to intercept *Red October*; the Americans



count on their listening devices to pick up the sound of Red October so that they may find it before its pursuers do.

Technology unites the other themes.

For instance, it is a product of different social systems. The Soviets emphasize duty and commitment to the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Therefore their military demands absolute obedience by enlisted men to their officers. Their submarines are designed to limit the access crewmen have to sophisticated equipment. For instance, only officers may use sonar equipment. Furthermore, crewmen are exposed to dangerous equipment because individual people are not as important as are the goals of their government. American and British ships, in contrast, seem almost luxurious. Comfortable quarters, good food, and safe equipment are important on U.S. ships. The Soviet sailors make wry jokes about the "softness" of their Western counterparts; the Americans view the designs of Russian nuclear submarines as primitive and too dangerous.

Technology repeatedly betrays the Soviets. Americans have a significant advantage over their counterparts and sometimes surprise the Soviets by being able to anticipate Soviet moves by tracking ships and aircraft with equipment much more sophisticated than that of the Soviets. Even Ramius is surprised to learn that his submarine's quiet propulsion system has been heard and tracked by American technicians. The Soviets push their sailors and equipment hard. Eventually one attack submarine is pushed too hard as it sacrifices safety for speed, and its nuclear reactor has a catastrophic core melt-down, sending the craft to the bottom of the ocean, trapping the sailors in an immobile tomb.



Significant Topics

Soviet and American Militaries

One of the ongoing commentaries of the novel is the detailed description of the Soviet and American submarines. These submarines represent the larger differences in the Soviet and American military systems, including the technology, personnel, and the personal responsibility of individual members of the Soviet military.

The technology of both submarines is compared in detail. The silent propulsion system of the Red October is intended to be the most sophisticated system for avoiding detection. While it works with all the other Soviet submarines, the Americans on the Dallas are able to detect it after a lot of skilled labor. The discussion of the silent propulsion system in the Pentagon points to an American model of a similar system that was never built. The reasons that the American version was never built provide clues to the potential problems that the Red October has with the same system.

Another large point of difference between the Red October and the Dallas is how the space is designed to accommodate the people on board. On the Red October, the space focuses on the nuclear reactor and the missiles. There is very little space for the crew to live in. On the Dallas, on the other hand, the crew has a separate dining area, several television and entertainment systems, and as ample private space. Fresh food and videotapes of movies and television make the lives of the crew much more comfortable on the Dallas.

The personal responsibility of the individual members of the submarine staff also shows a marked difference between the Soviet and American military systems. On the Red October, the enlisted men only have training related to a small section of the submarine and cannot do anything else. This makes the crew especially vulnerable to manipulation by the officers because they do not understand how the submarine works. On the Dallas, on the other hand, Jones, an enlisted man, is highly skilled in the technical equipment and is able to adapt quickly to new situations. The officers on the Red October are quite shocked by Jones's ability and the trust given to him by his superiors.

Soviet and American Life

In addition to the differences between Soviet and American military life, the novel also provides a glimpse into the differences between living in the Soviet Union and living in the United States and Britain. The personal life story of Captain Marko Ramius shows the particular problems with the Soviet system as Jack Ryan's personal life story shows the particular advantages he has had under the American and British systems.

Captain Ramius's life has been defined by his connections to the Communist Party. During his childhood, he grows up in an atmosphere of distrust by his neighbors because of his father's high position. As an adult, he learns that his fate is based on the



continued support of the Communist Party, a system that he does not believe in. At many stages throughout his life, he is not judged on his skill as a sea captain, but on how many times he makes political speeches or writes political essays. The death of his wife is directly attributed to the differences between life in the Soviet Union and life in America and Britain. The doctor that is responsible for her death is not held accountable for his errors because of his political connections. When the foreign medicine is unavailable, Soviet medicine is used, though everyone involved knows that it is not any good.

Jack Ryan's life in the CIA is based on his previous actions for the British government. He is trusted by his superiors with sensitive information and is expected to be adaptable to new situations whenever he is needed. The conditions of daily life for Jack Ryan are very different. Unlike Ramius, Jack Ryan's family is secure and healthy in London. His biggest concerns for them are in providing the right Christmas presents.

Personal vs. Political

While the novel chronicles a military crisis, it pays strict attention to the personal motivations of the characters in defining the real purpose of defection of the Red October as well as the joint American and British rescue mission. The personal lives of the characters are set apart from the political actions that they are forced to take. Often the personal and political are at odds with each other.

For Ramius, the personal and political are clearly at odds. On one hand, he is a dedicated officer in the Soviet navy. He has a position of high power that he builds and protects by taking all the proper political moves. However, his personal life has always conflicted with allegiance to the Communist Party. His childhood in Lithuania provides him with the understanding that the Communist ideals have been imposed on his people against their will. His adult relationship with his wife, Natalia, further divides Ramius from the politics of his country because he blames those politics directly for the death of his beloved wife.

Jack Ryan's position as a husband and father is equal to his political and professional life with the CIA. Throughout his maneuvers for the CIA and the American and British militaries, he often reflects on his responsibilities as a father, husband, and friend. Tied up with his military trip to Washington is a shopping trip for his daughter's Christmas presents. The personal and political are not, necessarily, conflicted for Ryan as they are in the case of Captain Ramius. In many ways, they line up with each other, as Ryan sees the continued stability of America and Britain as key for the security of his family and friends.



Style

Style

Points of View

The novel is written from the third person omniscient point of view. Many of the thoughts of the characters are explained at length, including detailed information about their personal backgrounds and histories. Often, the narrator withholds key pieces of information, which the reader slowly puts together over the course of the novel. Sometimes, the reader is given information from several different sources that allow the reader to figure out certain elements of the plot of which the characters involved are unaware.

The story is written from the point of view of the American side of the Cold War. For this reason, the American side is described in absolutely positive terms while the Soviet side is described in absolutely negative terms. The American political system is presented as perfect and without problems, while its Soviet counterpart is shown as completely corrupt. The point of view of the author is clearly seen in this one-sided portrayal of the conflict between the Americans and the Soviets.

Setting

The novel spans the globe in providing a setting for the conflict. On the ground, scenes take place in England, the surrounding areas of Washington, DC in the United States, and various locations in the Soviet Union including Moscow, a port in Siberia, and Lithuania. Specifically, there is a lot of action occurring in the major government offices of both the US and the USSR. Scenes among government officials take place in the White House, the Senate, the CIA, the Pentagon, the Naval Hospital, as well as both the public and private offices of the Kremlin, including some secret meeting rooms.

Otherwise, the majority of the action takes place at sea. The Red October crosses the Northern Atlantic from its ports in Siberia, in the Western half of the USSR. It makes its way down the Eastern coast of the United States. The ongoing rescue mission brings a wide range of naval vessels into the area, including both submarines and surface ships. Each of these naval vessels becomes a setting for itself. In particular, the Red October, the Dallas, and the HMS Invincible are described as worlds within themselves.

Language and Meaning

For the most part, the story is told using very simple language that is known to the average reader. Occasionally there are phrases in Russian, but all of them are either translated or explained within the context of the story. Russian culture is also explored in some detail within the novel. Readers need at least a basic understanding of Russian



culture, and particularly the culture of the Soviet Union, in order to understand some elements of the plot that directly refer to the social and political organizations of the Soviet Union.

Another significant language issue relates to the high concentration of nautical and other military terms that occur throughout the novel. Many of the objects and places on the submarines and ships are described using nautical terminology that might not be familiar to the average reader. Similarly, military terminology, including the military ranks of the Soviets, Americans, and British, are used throughout the novel. Often government officials also use military terms to describe their plans and request details about what is occurring at sea.

Structure

Each chapter of the novel covers the actions of one day during the eighteen-day military crisis. For the most part, the novel is told in chronological time. The action of the plot is carried out in many different locations at once. Each time that the story changes location, there is a subtitle explaining where the action is taking place. This allows the reader to follow the action through several different location changes in each chapter.

Often, however, there are several such changes in a short period, involving several different submarines or ships. It is often difficult for the reader to visualize the physical locations of each of these naval vessels, especially in relation to each other. Occasionally, the location is given in nautical terms that make it difficult for a reader without knowledge of nautical terms to determine how close the submarines and ships are to each other or how long it will take them to meet each other.



Quotes

" 'The Americans do this for two months, Ivan. Of course, their submarines are far more comfortable.' Despite her huge bulk, the *October's* crew accommodations would have shamed a gulag jailer. The crew consisted of fifteen officers, housed in fairly decent cabins aft, and a hundred enlisted men whose bunks were stuffed into corners and racks throughout the bow, forward of the missile room. The *October's* size was deceptive. The interior of her double hull was crammed with missiles, torpedoes, a nuclear reactor and its support equipment, a huge backup diesel power plant, and bank of nickel-cadmium batteries outside the pressure hull, which was ten times the size of its American counterparts." (The First Day, Friday, 3 December)

"After clearing the screen, he scrolled up the Christmas list, things he still had to get. With a simple command a copy of the list was made on the adjacent printer. Ryan tore the page off and tucked it in his wallet. Work didn't appeal to him this Saturday morning. He decided to play with his kids. After all, he'd be stuck in Washington for much of the coming week." (The Second Day, Saturday, 4 December)

" 'Without the pressure of being observed by a senior line officer,' Ramius confirmed. 'One must give young officers room to grow - but not too much. If you observe something that you question, you will inform me at once. There should be no problems. We are in open sea, there is no traffic about, and the reactor is running on a fraction of its total power. The final test for young officers ought to be an easy one. Find some excuse for traveling back and forth, and keep an eye on the children. Ask questions about what they are doing'." (The Third Day, Sunday, 5 December)

"But Jack knew how to analyze reports from such men and data from technical sources. He knew how to make a decision and was not afraid to say what he thought, whether his bosses liked it or not. This sometimes grated the old admiral, but on the whole he liked having subordinates whom he could respect. The CIA had too many people whose only skill was kissing ass." (The Fourth Day, Monday, 6 December)

"In all navies of the world, submariners were regarded as a curious breed, and submarines themselves looked upon sonar operators as odd. Their eccentricities, however, were among the most tolerated in the military service. The executive officer like to tell a story about a sonar chief he'd served with for two years, a man who had patrolled the same areas in missile submarines for virtually his whole career. He became so familiar with the humpback whales that summered in the area that he took to calling them by name. On retiring, he went to work for the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, where his talent was regarded not so much with amusement as awe." (The Fifth Day, Tuesday, 7 December)

"CARDINAL's job was necessarily as secret as his name. A senior adviser and confidant of a Politburo member, CARDINAL often acted as his representative within the Soviet military intelligence of the highest order. This made his information extraordinarily valuable - and, paradoxically, highly suspect. Those few CIA case officers who knew of



him found it impossible to believe that he had not been 'turned' somewhere along the line by one of the thousands of KGB counterintelligence officers whose sole duty is to watch everyone and everything." (The Sixth Day, Wednesday, 8 December)

"He shook his head. A fine woman killed by a damned incompetent fool of a surgeon. Nothing could be done about it, he was the son of a Central Committee member. It was an outrage the way things like that still happened, even after three generations of building socialism." (The Seventh Day, Thursday, 9 December)

"At the same time he was forced to admire the American president. A strange man, very open, yet full of guile. A friendly man most of the time, yet always ready to seize the advantage. He remembered stories his grandmother had told, about how the gypsies switched babies. The American president was very Russian." (The Eighth Day, Friday, 10 December)

"Petrov was less sure, and Svyadov was trying very hard not to shake. He had a sweetheart at home and wanted one day to have children. The young lieutenant had been painstakingly trained to understand everything that went on in the reactor systems and to know what to do if things went awry. And it was some consolation to know that most of the solutions to reactor problems to be found in the book had been written by some of the men in this room. Even so, something that could neither be seen nor felt was invading his body, and no rational person would be happy with that." (The Ninth Day, Saturday, 11 December)

"Petchkin pondered the significance of this. Didn't they know he had come off a nuclear - powered sub? Of course - he was trying to get Smirnov to blurt out that the man was off a missile submarine. They were trying to cloud the issue with this story about contamination. Nothing that would harm the patient, but something to confuse their class enemies. Clever. He'd always thought the Americans were clever. And he was supposed to report to the embassy in an hour - report what? How was he supposed to know who the sailor was?" (The Tenth Day, Sunday, 12 December)

"Ryan didn't like being a supernumerary. Everyone was polite, of course. Indeed, the hospitality was nearly overpowering. He had access to the command center, and when he watched to see how the Brits hunted subs down, everything was explained to him in sufficient detail that he actually understood about half of it." (The Eleventh Day, Monday, 13 December)

"It was like being a cat burglar, hanging this close to an enemy submarine - no, not an enemy, not exactly - hearing everything. In better acoustical conditions, they could have heard conversations. Not well enough to understand them, of course, but as if they were at a dinner party listening to the gabble of a dozen couples at once." (The Twelfth Day, Tuesday, 14 December)

"Donaldson kept Ritter waiting in his outer office for fifteen minutes while he read the paper. He wanted Ritter to know his place. Some of the DDO's remarks about leaks from the Hill had touched a sore sport with the senator from Connecticut, and it was



important for appointed and civil service officials to understand the difference between themselves and the elected representatives of the people." (The Thirteenth Day, Wednesday, 15 December)

"The silence that ensued was as long as it was awkward. Ryan and Williams stood in one corner of the compartment, Ramius and his men opposite them. It made Ryan think back to high school dances where boys and girls gathered in separate groups and there was a no-man's-land in the middle." (The Fourteenth Day, Thursday, 16 December)

"There was no moon. The three-ship procession entered the inlet at five knots, just after midnight to take advantage of the extra-high spring tide. The *Pogy* led the formation since she had the shallowest draft, and the *Dallas* trailed the *Red October*. The coast guard stations on either side of the inlet were occupied by naval officers who had relieved the 'coasties'." (The Fifteenth Day, Friday, 17 December)

"The fact that they were aboard a putatively hostile vessel and had found friendly Russian-speaking men had been overpowering for many of the young conscripts." (The Sixteenth Day, Saturday, 18 December)

"Mannion ran his hands over the vent controls. There sure were enough of them. He'd spent two hours the previous day figuring the complex system out. 'That's true, sir. Our officers do come from the ruling class. Just look at me,' he said deadpan. Mannion's skin was about the color of coffee grounds, his accent pure South Bronx." (The Seventeenth Day, Sunday, 19 December)

Adaptations

In 1990 Paramount released a motion picture version of *The Hunt for Red October*, starring Sean Connery as the Russian submarine skipper Marko Ramius, and Alec Baldwin as CIA agent Jack Ryan. Directed by John McTiernan, the film attracted generally favorable reviews. Much of the naval action and political intrigue was left out; motivations were simplified; and the plot was trimmed to a three way face-off between Ramius, Ryan, and Mancuso. The acting and cinematography are excellent throughout and the film garnered respectable box-office figures.



Key Questions

The Hunt for Red October is a big, wide-ranging novel with plenty of good topics for discussion presented in it. In fact, the biggest challenge to a discussion leader may be to keep the discussion of the novel focused. A discussion could easily wander through the technology of modern warfare to advanced technology in general and its effect on people, from cold war politics to international rivalries to internal American politics and how America's politics affects and is affected by international affairs, from Clancy's technique for structuring the novel to whether characters shape events or are shaped by them. Any major aspect of The Hunt for Red October could be discussed and debated for hours.

1. Why is the Red October's propulsion system as important as it is? Why are the Americans and Soviets worried about being able to hear each other's submarines?

2. How improbable is the plot?

Could a warship like the Red October actually defect to the United States without the American public learning of it?

3. How well does Clancy explain the technology of modern submarines? Is The Hunt for Red October a novel only for readers interested in technology?

Does it have other appeals besides its description of technology?

4. How in-depth is the characterization? Are Ramius, Ryan, and Mancuso credible characters?

5. What are the differing attitudes toward modern warfare of the Soviet, American, and British fleets?

6. Does The Hunt for Red October teach readers anything of value?

7. How accurate is Clancy's account of Soviet society? Is Ramius a logical product of that society?

8. Why would Ramius be surprised that American sonar has detected his boat?

9. The rival Atlantic fleets have a number of close calls which could result in war. What stops them short of all-out combat?

10. Why would the KGB agent on the Red October be willing to sacrifice his own life to prevent the submarine from being delivered into American hands?

11. How much does technology shape events in the novel?



Topics for Discussion

What are some of the significant differences between the Soviet and American submarines?

Describe Jack Ryan's role in the military operations? Does it make logical sense for him to be involved to such an extent, considering his background?

How does the element of suspense work in the novel? How would the feel of the novel be different if everything was laid out clearly from the beginning?

What commentary is made about American life in contrast to Soviet life?

Is the novel biased toward the American side? Are there any elements that balance the portrayal?

How do Ramius's personal experiences affect his attitude toward his country? Toward communism?

How does Jack Ryan's relationship with his family help to define his character?

How does the relationship between officer and enlisted men affect the overall climate of a Soviet submarine? Is it different on an American submarine?

Literary Precedents

Clancy uses a device to create suspense that has been used many times before. He organizes his novel chronologically, each chapter covering the events of one day, beginning with "The First Day: Friday, 3 December." Perhaps the most famous book to use this device to organize its narrative and create suspense as times runs out on its characters is Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey II's *Seven Days in May* (1962), a political novel that chronicles the attempt by military officers to overthrow America's democracy and replace it with a dictatorship.

Both *The Hunt for Red October* and *Seven Days in May* use the day-to-day, chapter-by-chapter device to keep readers apprised of what many characters are doing at the same time.

The Hunt for Red October is also one of many American novels to focus on the sea chase, such as Edward L. Beach's *Run Silent, Run Deep* (1955). It also owes much to numerous motion pictures about cat-and-mouse games between submarines and surface ships during World War II. Furthermore, the novel reflects the popularity of books about Cold War tensions, such as *The Third World War: August 1985* (1978) by General Sir John Hackett, et al. Such novels play on the tensions between the superpowers and dramatize how future conflicts may be resolved.



Related Titles

The Hunt for Red October introduces Jack Ryan, CIA officer. Patriot Games (1987) explains how he joined the CIA while protecting his family from Irish terrorists.

The Cardinal of the Kremlin (1988) tells of America's highest placed military spy in the Soviet Union — an aging war hero tormented by his betrayal of his country but determined to do what he can to bring the communist government. Ryan plays a role in saving Col. Mikhail Semyonovich Filitov's life and in the defection of the Soviet Union's Chief spy. All this is set against the backdrop of giant laser guns and space-based anti-missile technology.

Clear and Present Danger (1989) shifts away from the cold war to focus on the illicit drug trade. Columbian drug lords go so far as to assassinate the United States Attorney General. The American president declares that the drug lords represent a "clear and present danger" to the United States, and the CIA and the U.S. military attack the trade on the ground and in the air.

Ryan finds himself in a desperate fire fight as he helps extricate American soldiers treacherously abandoned in Columbia's jungles by a cruel, incompetent, self-important military bureaucrat who has ruined many lives in his climb to serving in the White House.

The Sum of All Fears (1991) tells of the terrifying plot by Palestinian terrorists to assassinate much of the top part of the United States government by setting a nuclear bomb off in Denver during the Super Bowl. They nearly start a nuclear war between the United States and the country they believe betrayed them, the Soviet Union. Only Ryan's strong backbone and quick mind averts the apocalypse.

Debt of Honor (1994) tells of Japanese resentment toward the United States and the plot of Japanese industrial leaders to seize American territory and drive the U. S. Navy out of the western Pacific Ocean. In a series of cowardly attacks against trusting Americans, the Japanese callously murder people who thought they were friends and very nearly end up launching a nuclear missile attack against the United States.

America almost loses the war because its military cutbacks in response to the end of the Cold War against the Soviet Union have gone too far. America cannot defend its citizens in the Pacific.

Executive Orders (1996) has Ryan becoming President of the U.S. He faces a shocking national crisis when most of the network leaders are killed.

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