

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy Study Guide

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy by John le Carré

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Plot Summary

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy by John LeCarre is an exciting story about a mole who moves up to the highest levels of the British intelligence community. Based on the information he provided, the covers of some of the best agents were blown. They know he is there, but they don't know who or where and they have to find him. The safety and existence of the British intelligence community depends on it. How do they do it?

The exciting story begins as the mole becomes known when a Soviet trade delegate tries to defect in Hong Kong. The story comes to the British government from an agent, Ricki Tarr, who has been missing for six months. The woman disappears but leaves a diary that tells the story of a Russian mole working in a highly-placed position in the Circus. They can't use too many people within the Circus because one of them might be the mole. The mole has access to the highest levels of Russian intelligence and is in a position to do a lot of damage to the British. They can't mount an obvious investigation without tipping off the mole, whose code name is Gerald. George Smiley, the Le Carre hero, comes out of retirement to help find the mole to help protect the integrity of the service. He must work outside of official channels since he is officially retired. He is considered out of bounds since his retirement, so he can't have any contact with the Circus employees.

The suspense filled novel has Smiley working with a few people that he feels he can trust and with retired Circus personnel. Smiley slowly and carefully gathers the information that he needs by whatever means is required. Some Circus personnel who know about the investigation are put in the position of having to steal the information that Smiley needs. Smiley is methodical in his research, paying attention to missing information and to inconsistencies and contradictions.

Le Carre slowly develops his characters, in many cases letting the reader figure out some of their roles and other identities before he reveals them in the story. For example, Operation Testify isn't introduced until late in the book, but details of the events are referred to throughout the novel. Jim Prideaux is introduced in the first chapter, but it isn't until later in the book that Smiley finds out where he is and the reader's suspicions of who he is are confirmed. This style of writing adds to the suspense of the novel as the reader tries to figure out the details before Le Carre explains them.

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy is one of a series of books about the Soviet master spy, Karla, who has made a career of making life difficult for the British. The book is a part of what is known as The Karla Trilogy. It is a thrilling book that is hard for the reader to put down. Almost every page is packed with suspense and action. Readers will not regret reading this book.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Jim Prideaux's arrival at Thurgood's School was witnessed by Bill Roach, a student as Jim drove his Alvis trailer to the "dip" and parked. If Major Dover had not died, Jim would not be here. Bill goes and introduces himself to Jim and thinks that Jim must have back problems. Jim asks Bill what he is good at and Bill replies he does not know. Bill blames himself for his parent's divorce and in general feels inadequate. Jim says he is a loner and figures Bill is also and compliments Bill as a good watcher. The all-boys school like Jim and nickname him Rhino, which was a compliment. There are gaps in Jim's resume, which Mr. Thurgood complained about to the agency, but the agency head said he'd only be there for a semester. However, Jim is back for the fall term.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The novel begins with Jim Prideaux's arrival at Thurgood's, where he drives his car and trailer into a hole. Bill Roach, a student runs out to help him. When Jim mentions marbles, Bill runs back to the building and returns with a marble. He is trying to please Prideaux, who he has just met.

Bill, like Jim, is a loner and is pegged as one by Jim. The boy feels inadequate in most everyday things and blames himself for his parents' divorce. This happens again after the end of the term where Bill worries about Jim and feels that he has failed him. Bill seems to suffer from depression and seems to need acceptance from people. Bill and the other students like and accept Jim.

Mr. Thurgood, the head of the school, is not quite as accepting of Jim as the student's are. He calls the agency, Stroll and Medley that he hired Jim through to complain about the gaps in his resume. He wants to know where Jim was during those gaps.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

George Smiley has had a bad day and is on his way to his home in Chelsea. He is separated from his wife, Ann, and lives partly on his pension, most of which his wife has withdrawn from their bank account. George meets Roddy Martindale, who seems happy to meet Smiley and invites him to dinner. At dinner, Martindale tells George that George was dismissed from his job in intelligence because of Smiley's close relationship with Control, his supervisor, who Smiley now learns is not really dead. Control's tenure ended because of a Czech affair where a man was killed and the story appeared in the newspapers. Smiley does not comment, so Martindale talks about Percy Alleline, the new intelligence chief. Martindale knows somebody is running something in intelligence and suggests it's Smiley.

Chapter 2 Analysis

George Smiley is introduced. His dinner with Roddy Martindale reveals that Smiley used to be an intelligence agent but was dismissed. Martindale wants to discuss the situation; Smiley does not. Martindale is trying to get Smiley to open up and talk and tries several different tactics during their dinner. Martindale knows that something is going on in the intelligence office and wants to know who is involved. He suspects someone who is supposedly retired like Smiley. He never says why he wants this information. Smiley either does not want to get involved or he is not talking. He avoids most of the discussion by not answering.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Smiley is angry at Martindale's prying. He decides to sell his house in London and buy a cottage in the countryside and will not allow his wife to return, even she wants to come back. Smiley has mental exercises to keep his mind alert in retirement—he memorizes details about the cars parked on his block. He does this also out of paranoia, not knowing what enemy may come after him. He has his house rigged in different ways to tell if someone has been there; however when he steps inside his home, there is an umbrella that is not his and he recognizes it as the modus operandi of Peter Guilliam. Guilliam is there to take Smiley to Oliver Lacon's home, the senior adviser in the cabinet office.

At Thurgood's, Bill Roach is thinking of recent events. Jim Prideaux had stolen the mail of another teacher, Miss Aaronson. He also noticed Jim had obtained an old Remington typewriter.

Chapter 3 Analysis

As Smiley is walking, he is fuming about Martindale prying at their dinner. Smiley refers to himself as out of date. In his day, intelligence matters weren't asked about, as Martindale had done and weren't discussed. His background is still evident in his behavior. It comes from his training. He is always worried about old enemies finding him, so he still memorizes the details of all the cars on his street looking for anything suspicious. His front door is rigged with wedges, so he can tell if anyone has been tampering with it. He recognizes the style of an old colleague who was waiting for him. He is summoned to the home of an adviser to the Cabinet.

Several curious events that have occurred at Thurgood's school have Bill Roach thinking. Jim Prideaux has apparently stolen mail belonging to another faculty member. He has also recently acquired an old Remington typewriter. Roach falls asleep wondering to whom Prideaux is writing letters.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Smiley comments that Guillian wasn't thrown out of the Circus as Smiley and others had been, and Guillian replies that he was given charge of the scalp-hunters or "Travel," handled defectors and situations that were too messy for other agents to perform. Guillian explains that the organization is now based on lateralism under the control of London Station. Bill Haydon is the head of London Station with Roy Bland being the number two man. He asks about a man named Jim Ellis and finds that he is still in quarantine with a back problem. Smiley remembers being at Lacon's residence at a time when Jim Ellis was in the headline news. Ricki Tarr from Penang joins them at Lacon's house. Tarr had been recruited by an agent in Dhakarta and worked in Malaysia and Kenya.

Chapter 4 Analysis

As Guillian is driving Smiley to the meeting at Lacon's residence, Smiley learns the new setup of the intelligence service. London Station has charge of everything that is operational and is under the command of Bill Haydon. The number two man is Roy Bland. These are both names that Martindale mentioned at their dinner meeting. They talk of another man named Jim Ellis who is sidelined with a back problem. The last time Smiley was at Lacon's house, Ellis was in the headline news.

The presence of Ricki Tarr at the meeting has Smiley thinking of their meeting ten or twelve years ago. Smiley had been active in recruiting agents for the Circus, and Tarr had been recruited by another agent. Smiley knows something of Tarr's career in the Circus and of some of the problems that he had caused.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Tarr tells the story of an incident at the Brixton school several months earlier in April. A Soviet trade delegate (code name Boris) was a target for the scalp-hunters and Guillian sent Tarr to Hong Kong to check out the situation. Tarr fills them in on the activities of Boris as Tarr listened to Boris' conversation at a bar with a Swede and a Chinese woman. Tarr says there were several things about Boris that suggested he was not really a trade delegate and thinks he's a professional. When Tarr searches Boris's room, he finds Boris's common-law wife, which is another breach of usual Soviet procedure.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Tarr tells the story of events in Hong Kong where there is word of a possible Soviet defector. There are too many things that don't add up about the situation. There are no Soviet security guards monitoring Boris, who also has a lot of foreign currency to throw around. He is also traveling with his common-law wife, Irina, which Soviet security did not allow in case of the possibility of defections. Tarr's training and instincts tell him that the man is a trained professional. This means that the case is London Station's jurisdiction and not the jurisdiction of the scalp-hunters.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Tarr talks with Irina, who is supposedly a textile delegate, and she complains about Boris and his treatment of her. Tarr cancels his plans to leave the country. After a few days, Irina tells Tarr she is in love with him and confesses that she and Boris are both from Moscow Centre, she as a courier, he as an agent. Instead of doing his job, Boris was just meeting other women in bars. Irina tells Tarr her story and her real name and the code and cover names she has used. She tells him of assignments she has had and shows him the tools she carries in her purse such as a signal pen and a hidden camera. Irina also gives him information about the Soviet network in Hong Kong. Lacon agrees that Tarr was taken in by Irina. Lacon looks pale as he speaks.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Tarr breaks with procedure when he doesn't notify London Station and stays in Hong Kong with Irina. After four days she finally opens up with him and tells him that she and her husband are both Moscow Centre trained agents. Boris did odd jobs for the local Soviet agent and Irina worked as a courier. Because she was so unhappy, she thought of telling her story to Percy Alleline, the British intelligence chief. This means she wants to defect.

Irina gives Tarr information about the Soviet apparatus in Hong Kong and shows him the spy tools she carries in her purse. He is taken in by her. The paleness of Lacon indicates that something very serious has happened.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Tarr realizes Irina is mentally unstable, changing her story and mind frequently. She keeps mentioning the need to see Percy Alleline and wants to defect, so Tarr takes a chance and talks to the Hong Kong agent, Thesinger.

Thesinger allows Tarr to send a coded message to the Head of London Station. Tarr wanted Irina to have the full defector treatment, as she claims to have information crucial to the survival of London Station. Smiley asks Tarr for the exact wording about the crucial information section of the message and Tarr tells him. Tarr waits some time, only receiving confirmation of London Station receiving the request. They ask for more information regarding Irina's position at Moscow Centre. Tarr tries to meet up with Irina, but she does not show. He learns that an unscheduled Soviet plane with four people aboard had taken off two hours earlier. One of the passengers was a woman in a coma.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Tarr feels that the sooner Irina defects, the better it will be for her. She is a nervous wreck. He sends a message to the Circus about Irina, giving them the relevant information and requesting the top treatment for her. He waits for a response, but there is none. He sends a follow up telegram. When he receives a response, it is a request for more information about Irina's position and status within Moscow Centre.

Tarr begins to worry when Irina fails to appear at one of the scheduled appointments. In a panic he checks the flights out of the airport and learns that a woman in a coma was taken aboard an unscheduled Soviet flight that had departed two hours earlier.

The fact that Tarr did not receive a prompt answer from London and when he did receive a reply, it was a request for information about Irina's position at Moscow Centre is suspicious. This is why Smiley asks about the procedure for sending messages. There are questions surrounding the whole situation.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The men speculate as to what could have happened to expose Irina. Tarr unsuccessfully searches the bars Boris frequented but did find a diary Irina left him. The diary mentions Karla, a KGB bigwig, whose driver, Ivlov serviced a British mole code named Gerald. Colonel Gregor Viktorov, whose cover name was Polyakov handled debriefing the mole and reported to Karla. The diary explains the complex communications process regarding the mole. Irina says people at the Circus are in danger and she is telling Tarr because she loves him. She says the guards are watching her and Boris has changed towards her. She wants to know if he has told anyone about her desire to defect.

Chapter 8 Analysis

More of the story becomes known from the diary that Tarr retrieved from the dead letter box. Irina's co-worker at Moscow Centre told her of an important KGB agent called Karla, who was sent to work at the Soviet Embassy in England to service a high-ranking mole named Gerald. Gerald worked at the Circus. She explains who some of the people were and how communications were handled with Karla at Moscow Centre.

The problem had to be serious for Smiley, who was retired, to be briefed on the situation. The seriousness of the situation is obvious from the diary. Is it true?



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Tarr had not photocopied the diary, just handwritten it, and returned the original to where Irina had left it. Tarr is listed as a defector, so Smiley wants to know why he suddenly showed up. Tarr explains that he was trying to lose any trail the Russians may have had on him. Smiley asks him a number of other questions, for which Tarr seems to have a reasonable answers. Smiley thinks the diary looks professionally prepared. Tarr says that if Irina is correct, the Circus is finished.

Chapter 9 Analysis

After listening to Tarr's story, Smiley wants more information and asks questions. He is interested in what their signals were and who instigated their use. Tarr laid low for the last six months and spent much of the time in Kuala Lumpur with his daughter and her mother. Smiley senses that Tarr is lying about some of the details. Smiley is curious about how he traveled to London and why and why Tarr contacted Guillian instead of going to an overseas residency, which would have been safer for him.

There are several places where Guillian interrupted and answered for Tarr or added to what Tarr had said. Guillian could have been trying to smooth over some of the rough aspects in Tarr's personality so there weren't any flare ups.

Smiley is suspicious because of the irregularities. Tarr didn't do the logical thing and go to an overseas residence. Guillian reported the incident to Lacon and not to his own superiors. Smiley also says the diary is too perfect and flawless and that it appears to have been prepared professionally. Tarr says that if Irina's information is correct, they will need a new Circus.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

After Tarr leaves, Lacon tells Smiley that he thought their discussion the previous year was arranged by Control as a way of keeping Alleline from obtaining Control's job. Lacon will inform the Minister of the situation about Irina. They talk about Ellis and how Smiley thought Ellis had been betrayed from the inside. Lacon thought it was Control's incompetence. Lacon wouldn't allow an inquiry into the betrayal of Ellis. This is the incident that resulted in the dismissal of Control. Lacon thinks Circus will tighten their procedures now, but Smiley tells him that might alert Gerald. Smiley suggests another service run the investigation, but Lacon says that will be unacceptable.

One-hundred and twenty of the four hundred active agents are behind the Iron Curtain. They discuss Ellis, who was shot in the back. Lacon wants Smiley to handle the investigation. Before leaving, Smiley thinks of how he finally broke away from the past and the Circus. He thought of his wife.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Smiley and Lacon go for a walk after Tarr's departure. Lacon apologizes to Smiley for not listening to him a year earlier when he had suggested the possibility of a highly-placed Russian mole. They discuss the situation that involved the Czech affair with Smiley's request for an inquiry claiming that Ellis had been betrayed from the inside of the Circus. His request was denied and the incident eventually led to the ouster of Control.

Lacon discusses the problems faced in trying to hunt the mole. Any procedure they use is within the Circus, and they don't know who the mole is or who they can trust.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Guilliam is a career intelligence man. After his cover was blown he did odd jobs in London. Guilliam had heard the stories of the botched operations that marked the end of Control's management. One day Smiley fired Guilliam offering no explanation. The next day Guilliam learns more about the big shake-up when Control was out and Percy Alleline was the new head with Bill Haydon as second in command. Control died around Christmas and Guilliam was assigned to Brixton. Now Guilliam is back at Brixton with a list of instructions from Smiley, including photographing various documents inside the Circus. Guilliam also requests some money. Guilliam encounters Bill Haydon, Roy Bland and Toby Esterhase as he completes several tasks.

Guilliam sneaks a peek at the duty log books for the night of Tarr's messages to London and looks through the logs for the different months, looking for some kind of pattern. He also finds the information regarding who was on duty on the nights in question. Guilliam takes several evasive maneuvers and finally talks in code to a man named Mendel, telling him what he learned that day.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Smiley is directing the investigation of the mole and he has Peter Guilliam helping him. In addition to supplying Smiley with documents from head-hunters, Guilliam is sent to the Circus building to check the duty log books for information about the messages to and from Tarr in Hong Kong. He has to do this on the sneak without the knowledge of the people in the building. He also finds the duty rooster for the night staff known as the janitors and checks the information for the nights of April 10th - 11th.

Guilliam performs the tasks that Smiley had requested. On his way home, he engages in a cover-coded phone conversation with a man named Mendel.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Smiley does not feel nostalgic when he visits Oxford; it has been too long. Smiley goes inside a building where he finds Miss Connie Sachs, who had been a researcher at the Circus. She greets him warmly. He questions Miss Sachs about some people and events, particularly Polyakov. Connie begins with a fifth-rate defector named Stanley in 1963. His interrogators were interested in a specialty camp that Stanley had attended. There were some fenced in huts at the camp that were a training facility for Karla. The information gained from Stanley was forgotten about until Major Mikhail Fedorovich Komarov was caught spying in Tokyo, who was eventually shot. The Japanese defense official involved was said to be a mole. Brandt was one of the names used by Karla in the 1930s. She traced other agents who were considered to be trained by Karla and came up with three names, one of which is Colonel Viktor, who she claims disappeared. Smiley tells her to talk about Aleksey Aleksandrovich Polyakov, who Connie knew as Aleks.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Smiley's investigation has him looking for information. He is obviously staying away from official channels as much as he can in his search for Gerald. He has contacts from all of his years of service and goes to see Connie Sachs, who used to be a researcher at the Circus. She tells him what she knows. She hasn't connected the names Viktorov and Polyakov to being one man. Smiley is curious as to why she was told she could not investigate Polyakov.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Connie continues her story, switching to Aleks. He had been in London for seven years before the Circus even knew about him, she tells Smiley. He was that good. She provides information about his background, education and description. She used to listen to him talk on tapes, although she had never met or seen him. Smiley learns that he used to live in Highgate and that Alleline and Esterhase wouldn't listen when she said that he was trained by Karla and was a hood, or spy. He asks her how she could be so sure. She says he had army written all over him even though there wasn't anything in the records. He also chose the one flat that the lamplighters couldn't get near.

The lamplighters couldn't find Aleks doing anything unusual, and they lessened the amount of surveillance on him. His activities conformed to his cover perfectly and appeared respectable from every angle. He received a Persil rating from the lamplighters after three years. This meant that they felt he had no links to intelligence work at all. One day a Circus employee calls Connie and tells her that he spotted Polyakov going to a ceremony at a cemetery with other attaches and the ambassador and that he was in full military dress with more medals than any of the others.

She called Toby Esterhase with the information and told him to fully investigate Polyakov. He said that was up to Alleline so she sent a report to Alleline. He wasn't impressed at her claim that Polyakov was running a mole. She was told to leave him alone. She also filed a report on Lapin who she suspected was Ivlov. He was usually at Polyakov's side and stayed at the embassy when Polyakov went to Moscow. Connie was fired soon after filing the report on Lapin.

Connie shows him her medals and pictures of her days at the Circus. When he gets away from Connie, he catches a train to Slough and meets Mendel who tells him what information Guillian has acquired. There is no record for the night of April 10th and 11th in the duty officer logs. The pages had been cut out with a razor blade as was any other information for that night. There was a note in Esterhase's handwriting that any inquiries should be forwarded to the Head of London Station and it was dated the previous Friday, the day that Tarr arrived in England.

Mendel confirms what Connie had told him. Both Polyakov and Lapin had Persil ratings from the lamplighters. He gives Smiley the briefcase with the documents and tells him about Thurgood's, the school near Taunton and that he thinks that Ellis is there, even though he doesn't mention him by name.

Guillian's girlfriend, Camilla, arrives home late. He finds that her flute teacher is also her sometime lover. He lays awake thinking and is a little apprehensive. Tomorrow he must steal the file on Operation Testify, which was the Prideaux affair.



Chapter 13 Analysis

Connie continues her story talking about Aleks. She had been fascinated about him from the beginning and pegged him as a Karla-trained hood, but Alleline and Esterhase didn't agree. Connie felt that he was too perfect and lived his cover in every way, but he selected a house to live in that the lamplighters couldn't get near, and this is one of the things that made her suspicious. When she found out that he had been in the Army, she tried again to gain permission to investigate Polyakov, telling Alleline that she was sure that Polyakov was running a mole. Alleline told her to stay away from Polyakov. She also filed a report on Lapin, suspecting him of being a leg-man for Polyakov. She was fired soon after, along with Smiley, Control and others.

Smiley learns of the results of Guillian's research. Any records pertaining to the night of April 10th - 11th were missing with a note to forward any inquiries to the Head of London Station. The note was written by Esterhase on the previous Friday. This is the day that Tarr arrived in London. Mendel delivers the briefcase to Smiley and tells him of the school in Taunton called Thurgood's and that he thinks that Ellis, who he doesn't mention by name, is there.

Smiley is slowly gathering information, using his various contacts.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Bill Roach is happy because today Jim Prideaux's car-club rally opened. They had refurbished Jim's Alvis. There were fourteen students in the race. Jim sees an approaching figure and asks Bill, who he calls Jumbo, if he knows the man. One student thinks the stranger has something to do with the church because he was talking with the vicar after chapel. Jim tells the students to let him know if they see the stranger again. The next day Jim sees the stranger talking to the vicar. Bill notices that Jim's face darkens during the conversation.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Jim Prideaux is obviously popular with the boys at Thurgood's. He seems to spend time with them and has helped Bill Roach acquire some badly needed self-esteem. Jim is curious about a stranger that he sees on the school grounds during the car race/rally he has established for the boys. When he sees the stranger around again the next day, his demeanor changes. Obviously, in his former profession, he made some enemies, like Smiley did and had to be on the alert for them.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Smiley establishes his operational headquarters at the Hotel Islay in Sussex Gardens, using the name Barraclough. Mendel tips the proprietor, Mrs. Graham, heavily to keep a log of the comings and goings of people and of incoming letters and what objects are in the room. What Mendel does not know is that Jim has his students tracing Mendel's steps. Lacon supplies Smiley with documents he wants, though Lacon does not like this breach in procedure. Mrs. Graham reports this information to Mendel. Smiley reads a document on Operation Witchcraft and wants more information. He questions Lacon, who is upset at the questioning. Lacon says a document Smiley wants is in the Minister's safe and Lacon doesn't know the combination. Smiley tells him that he wants everything that had to do with Prideaux.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Jim Prideaux, who was wary of the stranger that appeared at Thurgood's, has his car club of students tracing the activities of Mendel, unknown to Mendel or Smiley.

Smiley's investigation is proceeding with Lacon providing the documents that Smiley requires. Lacon has to remove the documents, take them to Smiley after working hours, and then return the documents the next morning before the staff realizes that they are missing. Lacon does not like doing this but there is no other way. When Smiley says he wants to read a Secret Annexe to Operation Witchcraft, Lacon tells him that he can't reach that information as it is locked in the Minister's safe. Lacon feels that Smiley is straying from the subject he is supposed to be investigating. Smiley tells him that he wants everything that had to do with Jim Prideaux.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Smiley thinks about how Percy Alleline and Control came to be combatants. Alleline was involved in an attempt to replace a local potentate in the Middle East. Alleline blamed Control for the aborted mission. Alleline was retired from the field and received a charter, but the restrictions were like a straight jacket. Some of the Operation Witchcraft files arrive via a visitor. The first document is written by Alleline, who established a reading room known as the Adriatic Working Party. Readers would be watched over by a janitor who would have a list with pictures of those authorized to have access to the information. Smiley remembers doubting the authenticity of a document Alleline had prepared concerning a high level Soviet naval dispatch. Alleline refuses to allow Circus personnel evaluate the document but does say it came from a man code named Merlin. Control was angry.

Alleline's report was well-received by others in the British government, but there was no follow-up report for six weeks. Then Alleline produced three more reports, which came from Soviet inter-departmental correspondence. One described the tension within the Comecon and the problems with Western trade. Another described the purges and changes in Hungary. The third discussed the strategies for negotiations over nuclear warheads with a weakened President of the United States. The documents were considered to be an intelligence gem. Merlin produced high quality intelligence that resulted in Alleline having his project approved.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Smiley is thinking of the acrimony between Control and Alleline and how it developed when the documents from Operation Witchcraft arrived. He reads one written by Alleline, who devised new procedures for the reading of information pertaining to the project. He was trying to devise a procedure that eliminated the problems known in other distribution methods. Smiley recognizes that Alleline is trying to launch his own operation, but the charter required that he had to have approval from Control.

While reading one of the Operation Witchcraft documents, Smiley remembers an incident that occurred about a Soviet naval dispatch. Alleline had prepared the report and refused to tell them anything about the source, who was code named Merlin. Smiley feels that he is still being guided by Control in his present investigation. He still feels the man's presence at his side.

Lacon's night time activities with Smiley are making the man into a nervous wreck. He is tired and haggard looking and suffering from the lack of sleep.

The subsequent three Witchcraft documents that Alleline reported on resulted in Alleline obtaining approval for his reading room.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Smiley continues to investigate the meetings between Control and Alleline and wonders if maybe Control was not competent. There is a continual flow of high-quality, accurate Witchcraft documents but no way to corroborate the information in any of the reports. The Minister headed a Witchcraft committee. Smiley studies the lists of those cleared for access to the reading room. The same four names kept reappearing—Alleline, Bland, Esterhase and Haydon. After Control's death, Ann kept asking questions about her cousin Bill Haydon's position in the Circus. Was he as important as Smiley and so on?

Smiley asks Esterhase what his lamplighters are doing since they were two months behind on their paperwork. Smiley suggests Alleline might have ordered Esterhase to do something and not report it. He doesn't get any direct answers out of Esterhase. Next he went to see Roy Bland, but he knows that the path leads to Bill Haydon. Smiley studies the financial figures related to Operation Witchcraft and finds Esterhase made eight trips to Paris, The Hague, Helsinki and Berlin that were charged to Witchcraft. There were nineteen trips after Control's departure. Bland was recruited by Smiley and used the cover of a leftist intellectual until he had a nervous breakdown and was given a desk job in London. Bland didn't lie about his involvement in Witchcraft. Operation Witchcraft resulted in Alleline replacing Control and his three cohorts receiving medals.

Chapter 17 Analysis

The battle between Control and Alleline is well-known throughout the Circus with Control being left off an important Witchcraft committee headed by the Minister. Control asks Smiley to do anything he can to buy Control more time. Control kept telling Smiley that there were three of them, plus Alleline, and that they were buying their way with counterfeit money. He never explained what he meant. Did he mean, perhaps, that they were manufacturing information as a way of forcing Control out with the four of them obtaining high-level positions? Smiley had investigated at the time and knew that the path led to Bill Haydon.

When Smiley studies the Operation Witchcraft financial figures, he finds that Toby Esterhase was making frequent trips to Paris, Helsinki, Berlin, The Hague, Istanbul and Sofia with the reason recorded as collecting product. He had caught Esterhase in a lie. Bland hadn't lied when Smiley talked to him about his involvement in the plot. The result of Operation Witchcraft was that Alleline replaced control and Esterhase, Bland and Haydon received big promotions.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Smiley believes Bill Haydon, who had had an affair with Smiley's wife, is needed to complete the character of the group. Haydon knew why Merlin was there. Smiley says Bland does the translations and Bill writes the reports. Bill tells him that Smiley's problem is that he doesn't find Percy Alleline acceptable. Merlin would have been acceptable if he was Haydon's source, but not when he is Alleline's source. Haydon tries to tell Smiley that Alleline has sold out to Karla, but Smiley wants information on Merlin. Haydon knows Control is going through the files looking for information on them. His source is one of the secretaries. Haydon tells Smiley to cut himself from Control. He can't handle Alleline's success with Merlin.

Chapter 18 Analysis

When Smiley went to see Bill Haydon, Haydon knew why he was there. He knew that Smiley had figured out the purpose was to unseat Control. This is evident when he tells Smiley that Alleline isn't acceptable to Smiley. He tells Smiley to break away from Control for his own good. Control can't handle Alleline's success with Merlin, and the success coming at the end of Alleline's career.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Smiley continues reading about what transpired with Merlin since Smiley's dismissal from the Circus. There were noticeable changes since Alleline assumed control. Smiley learns about funding for a London house, of which Alleline had refused to provide the location. Smiley begins to believe that Merlin is in London and also notices that several discrepancies are noted by a J.P. Ripple, a member of the Foreign Office Research Department. Ripple was told to mind his own business and the proposition was put forth that Merlin wasn't one person, but several. The memo goes on to say that it is now more important than ever to protect the secrecy of the London house in order to protect their London operation. At that moment, Smiley receives a coded phone call from Peter Guilliam who is requesting an emergency meeting.

Chapter 19 Analysis

While reading about what had happened in Operation Witchcraft since Control's death, Smiley finds that there are fewer trips to European capitals and a more steady flow of information. He notices that funds have been allocated for a London house that Alleline refused to provide the address of or say what its purpose was. This is suspicious to Smiley since Witchcraft was a foreign operation. Why did they need a London house unless Merlin was in London?

When a researcher notes several discrepancies in dates and places, it is revealed that Merlin consists of different sources, not just one as they had maintained. There is also a note saying that it is now more important than ever to protect the secrecy of the London house.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Guilliam signed in the the archives' reading room and looks for the Operation Testify documents. Lacon said he didn't have any of the documents, so Guilliam would have to steal them somehow from archives. Guilliam's dry run at the archives was successful, so when he went for his next requisitioned file, he took a Testfy file and replaced it with the same color coded file he had requisitioned. He learns the annexes are in London Station and need Haydon's authorization to be released. Guilliam manages a swap of the dummy files with the ones he needs and leaves archives. He sees Toby Esterhase, who tells him Alleline wants to see him.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Guilliam is in the position of using the skills of his trade against his own employer. He has to supply Smiley with the information that he needs and most of it has to be obtained in unofficial ways. Since both Smiley and Guilliam know the procedures, it is easy to find ways around them. Since Guilliam is known to the staff, he isn't suspected of committing any breaches. Guilliam notes his own nervousness in the Achieves. He successfully manages to do what Smiley told him to do and replaces the real Operation Testify file with a phony dummy file.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Guilliam and Esterhase worked a couple assignments together, but the two men did not know each other well. Alleline asks Guilliam about meeting with Ricki Tarr, who is still considered a defector from the Circus. They want Tarr to come in. Alleline can throw the book at Guilliam for not reporting his meetings with Tarr if any such meetings had taken place. They ask questions about Tarr's daughter. Alleline believes that if they find his daughter, they find Tarr.

Guilliam signs a form stating he read Witchcraft Report No. 308 from Merlin, and he will not divulge the contents of the report. Guilliam is asked about Smiley and responds that Smiley is considered out of bounds for Circus personnel. It hits Guilliam that Camilla is married to the flute teacher Sand. She is the source of the information on his comings and goings.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Guilliam is raked over the coals for his meetings with Tarr. "What's the shrug for? What the hell are you shrugging at me like that for? I'm talking to you about a defector from your own damn section; I'm accusing you of playing hookey with him behind my back, of taking part in damn-fool parlour games when you don't know the takes involved, and all you do is shrug at me down the table. There's a law, Peter Guilliam, against consorting with enemy agents. Maybe you didn't know that. I've a good mind to throw the book at you!" (Chapter 21, pg. 182).

They tell him that Tarr and his daughter and the daughter's mother traveled on phoney passports in the name of Poole that came from Russia. The information, Alleline says, came from Merlin. They seem to know that Guilliam has seen Tarr and Smiley. Is Tarr a Russian agent that planted phony information or is Merlin trying to protect Gerald?



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Guilliam and Smiley go see Tarr, who he didn't tell them the whole truth. Smiley says that he thinks they have been admitted to the inner circle by Karla. They ask Tarr if he has talked of meeting with his family. Smiley gets Tarr to admit he bought his family passports that were already blown, but Smiley believes something different happened and gives the scenario. Tarr's reaction demonstrates that Smiley is correct. Smiley reassures Tarr that he does not know where Tarr's family is hiding. After leaving Tarr, Guillima tells Smiley he read a report that likely means Irina, Ivlov and Boris were executed. They will not tell Tarr.

Chapter 22 Analysis

After Guilliam tells Smiley of the meeting at the Circus, they go see Tarr. They need to check out certain details because they don't know who is lying at this point. He finally admits that he bought passports for them. After Smiley's second scenario, Tarr lunges at him and has to be subdued. Smiley says that Danny and her mother should be safe as long as Tarr doesn't try to contact them.

They decide that Tarr should not be told that they suspect that Irina was one of the three victims executed at Lubianka. They stop at a café and have dinner discussing Karla and Operation Witchcraft.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Smiley tells Guillian that Karla was a legend, working in various countries in Europe. Very little was known about him, and many people who worked with him ended up dead. Nobody except perhaps Gerald knows what Karla's name and cover were. In 1955, Karla went from California to India, where he was arrested on immigration charges at the request of the British under the name Gerstmann. Smiley tries to persuade him to defect, not knowing Gerstmann was Karla. Smiley returned the next day for Karla's decision who still wouldn't talk to him. Karla resumed his career in Moscow and never used illegal radios again. Smiley says the information Alleline had come from the Russians, who were fooled by Tarr.

Smiley spends the night studying and taking note on the various documents Guillian brought him. He found a pattern with nine reports—either Esterhase made a trip or Polyakov was in London. Some of Merlin's most important information came in the period immediately following the Hong Kong affair, when Polyakov was in Moscow. Furthermore, most of the non-topical background type reports usually appeared when Polyakov was in Moscow. He reads the information on Operation Testify.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Not much is known about Karla, and Smiley tells Guillian the little bit that he knows and how he met Karla in 1955, when Smiley tried to persuade Karla to defect in India. He didn't know the man was Karla, and they treated him as just another case. When he met with the man, he couldn't get him to talk, no matter what he tried. Karla ended the interview by standing up indicating he wanted to go back to his cell.

Smiley admits he made a fool of himself with Gerstmann. He rode to the airport with him and flew part of the distance on the plane with him, and he still wouldn't talk. He finally gave up.

Smiley spent that night pouring over the material for the investigation. He looked at kind of information in the reports and found that the topical reports coincided with period when Polyakov was in London or Esterhase had been traveling. The background reports were usually filed when Polyakov was in Russia. The one exception was right after the Hong Kong incident when a report with information about impenetration of American agency and coverage of its agents was sent. Smiley's work was paying off.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

The "Matron" at Thurgood's is worried about Bill Roach. He is sick again. They don't realize his illness is caused by terror. Bill had seen Jim unpack a gun and load it.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Roach is terrified because of what he did. He spied on Jim and watched him dig up a package. Instead of going on his way, the boy peeked through the trailer window and saw Jim unpackage a gun and load it. The boy is terrified by what he saw, so terrified that he is now sick from the fear. He doesn't know of Jim's past career.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Smiley and Lacon meet with Minister Sercombe in Mitcham at Mendel's house. Smiley tells Sercombe they must stop the negotiations with the Americans about the secret annexe on Witchcraft. The Minister says he knows of no such thing. Smiley says feeding information through a known leak is not unknown in the world of intelligence. Any deal with the Americans would have the Russians feeding them information also and would put Gerald at the top.

After Sercombe leaves, Lacon hands documents about Jim Prideaux to Smiley.

Chapter 25 Analysis

A meeting place has to be found where Smiley, Lacon and the Minister, Miles Sercombe can meet. They have to be careful because of security reasons. The purpose of the meeting is to advise the Minister not to make any deals with the Americans that involve Operation Witchcraft, since Smily and the others suspect that the Americans are being fed information by the Russians. It would also enhance the status of the mole, Gerald, if the Russians could also feed the Americans.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Smiley visits Sam, the man who was duty officer the night Jim Prideaux was shot and says there are missing pages from the records of that night. Sam tells Smiley about all the details of that night and that Percy Alleline arrived and took over the operation. Sam did not mention Control to Alleline. Sam was fired for drinking on the premises and now works for a bookie. Smiley said that Bill Haydon was with Ann when Sam called there. Sam hadn't told Ann anything about the Czechs, so how did Bill know about it when he arrived at the Circus. Sam ventures that Haydon stopped at his club. Smiley then asks why Bill wouldn't have known that the agent was shot.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Smiley's investigation must proceed on the basis of people's memories, since most of the log records have been cut from the log books. This is why he went to see Sam Collins, who was the duty officer the night Jim Prideaux was shot. Sam tells him how Control asked him to be duty officer and to report anything that came in to Control alone. A call came in saying that Arcadi's five was down. The press called with a story of a British spy shot in Prague. The monitoring and radio staff report has the town as Brno. The place is hectic and Sam is trying to locate some of the staff. He called Ann looking for Smiley or Haydon and Ann said neither was there.

Haydon arrives saying he heard the news at his club. Sam tells him that it is Jim Ellis who was shot. Haydon didn't know that the agent was shot and wants to know if he is dead. Sam doesn't know. Haydon took control of things, something that Control was unable to do. Soon after being relieved, Sam spent two months vacationing in the south of France. Alleline was in charge when Sam returned and when questioned, Sam stuck to his story and was fired.

Smiley raises two interesting questions. If Haydon was with Ann, how did he know that there was a problem in Czechoslovakia? If he heard the reports at his club, how come he didn't know that the agent had been shot?



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Smiley meets with Max, who had worked for Circus and was fired. Max tells Smiley that Jim asked for Max to partner with him for a job so big that it was run from the top. Jim told Max to take leave for a few days and obtain an Austrian identity and driver's license. Jim would have a Czech cover, and Max would go as an Austrian. They would travel to Brno. Max would meet Jim on a designated side street, and they would drive out of Brno to find a parked, black car, whose driver would take them to the rendezvous. They worked out all of their signals and contingency plans.

Jim missed the first rendezvous and Max would wait till Monday for Jim and Max was to leave if Jim didn't show. If Jim appeared, Max was to take a message to Control, and if Jim didn't appear, Max was to return to his own life as if nothing had happened. Max was drinking in a restaurant when a waitress told him there had been a clash with counter-revolutionaries and a shooting in the woods. On Monday, Max returns to London and tries to see Control but learned that Control was ill. Smiley asks how Jim got back? Max says the émigrés don't talk to him anymore but that Jim was put in prison and nine members of the network were killed.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Smiley is digging for information and talks to Max, one of the people involved in the botched mission in Czechoslovakia. Max was with Jim on the mission. He tells Smiley that Jim said it was a special job run by the top. They made their plans which went well until they met in Brno. Max knew there was trouble when he met Jim in Brno but Jim didn't provide any of the details. Then Jim changed the plans and told Max to wait in a hotel until Monday. Jim was shot soon after and Max made it back to London. Max is bitter because nine members of the Czech network were killed. He thinks that Jim gave them away to gain his own release and that Smiley shouldn't tell him that English allies are good for the Czechs.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Smiley's meets Jerry Westerby and asks him about a journalist job that took Jerry from Budapest to Prague where Jerry heard a story, of which he had written to Smiley. Jerry had wanted to write a story about Jim Ellis but Toby Esterhase refused to allow him to do so. Jerry had been in Prague and a man asks Jerry if he wants to know the truth about Jim Ellis. The man was on maneuvers in the forest near Brno when the forest was cleared. The man learns that the Russians were looking for a British spy named Hajek, who had tried to kidnap a general. The Russians had shot the British agent. The nephew had asked his superior why they had to look for the agent if the Russians had shot him. Smiley asks if Russians moved into the forest on the first or second night? Jerry says they moved in on the first night and were waiting for the agent who they shot on Saturday. Jerry told the story to Toby Esterhase, who accused Jerry of drinking too much and said the story was a plant by the Czechs, and Esterhase wouldn't allow Jerry to write about it, so Jerry wrote a letter to Smiley with the information. As they part, Smiley tells Jerry that if he is contacted by Esterhase, he shouldn't mention that he saw Smiley. He gives Jerry a number to call if Esterhase contacts him.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Smiley's search for information takes him to Jerry Westerby, a journalist who was often used by the Circus to do small jobs, such as letter drops. He tells Smiley the story he was told by a Czech army conscript about how the forest outside Brno was cleared when the Russians came in and how they were sent from place to place the Saturday of the shooting. Smiley learns that the Russians were waiting for Prideaux, who they knew as Hajek. They were there waiting the day before he arrived in Brno.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Smiley mulls over a letter to Fanshawe by Bill Haydon recommending Jim Prideaux for a job in British intelligence. Haydon tells how they met in a bar and talked to a Russian academician named Khlebnikov and then went back to Haydon's room to drink. That was the only known contact that Jim Prideaux ever had with Communists. Jim had belonged to various college clubs, including the Populars but had no known left wing contacts.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Smiley is drawn to a letter written by Haydon to Fanshawe recommending Jim for work in the Circus. There is a reference to their meeting a Russian academician in a bar. Smiley doesn't know why he is drawn to the letter but he keeps rereading it looking for information in it. Who is Khlebnikov and what does he have to do with anything?



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Jim Prideaux's shoulder is leaking and he is in pain. He treats the wound himself, taking some vodka for the pain. When he finished grading some papers, he went for a walk. He went to the chapel and sat in a pew and felt the cold metal he had taped to the underside of the pew. He developed a system to see if his mail was being watch.

Someone had asked at Mrs. McCullum's where Jim lives. Jim was prepared if he had to flee. While Jim is talking to the boys that evening, he sees George Smiley get out of the car. His first temptation is to go to the church and retrieve his gun but he goes directly to his trailer.

Chapter 30 Analysis

George Smiley finally shows up at Thurgood's. Jim had learned from Roach that a man was asking questions about him. He spots a blue Ford near the church and sees Smiley get out of the car. Smiley's investigation had to bring him to Thurgood's to talk with Jim Prideaux sooner or later.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Smiley tells Jim that Control is dead and that he, Smiley, was dismissed from the Circus and that Alleline is now in charge. Smiley also tells him that the cover of members of the Czech networks were blown and they were killed and it is believed that Jim is responsible. Jim tells Smiley that Jim had first been briefed by Control at a safe house meeting. Control told him that Testify was a Czech general named Stevcek. He had requested a meeting with a member of the Circus in the forest outside of Brno. He had defense information to pass. He was the fourth man in charge in the Czech army and was involved in a variety of activities. Jim said that Stevcek's real job was the English section of Moscow Centre. Control kept telling Jim that Stevcek had the key, that Stevcek had the answers. Control felt that Stevcek wanted to sell the mole that was inside the Circus. Smiley remembers Max telling him that the message might only be one word. The one word would have been a name and that would have been the name of the mole.

Jim and Control worked out a code. Alleline was Tinker, Haydon was Tailor, Bland was Soldier, Esterhase was Poorman and Smiley was Beggarman. Jim spotted surveillance when he arrived in Brno. Smiley asked if he thought about dropping the assignment and Jim says that he never thought of it. Smiley tries to find out why.

Jim says there were no problems when he entered the black parked car and the driver told Jim the procedure for the meeting with the general. When they reach a certain place, Jim turns and hits the Magyar and takes his gun and orders the man to switch clothing. Jim tells the driver that Jim will enter the cabin first and tell the general that Jim is just taking precautions. At the cabin, the floodlights were turned on and shooting began. There were also people taking pictures. Jim is lying on the ground losing consciousness, but aware there is a lot of shooting going on and that the ambulance people are by him and someone is taking pictures.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Smiley learns the details of Jim's assignment from Jim. He learns the identify of Testify and that Control thought that Stevcek would provide the name of the mole in the Circus. Jim tells Smiley that he picked up surveillance teams in Prague and they followed him to Brno. He thought he had shed them when he met Max. Smiley learns the details of what happened at the supposed meeting with the general and how Jim was shot. Jim remembers thinking that he walked into the biggest sucker's trap. He knew that it was all a setup.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Jim was moved around a lot and planned the story he would tell. He knew the Czechs knew more about Stevcek than he did and he didn't know if the man was a plant or if he had been set up. His story would not mention anything about Control or the existence of a mole in the Circus. He also decided on a lot of useless information that they would already know. He wanted his interrogators to think that he was broken. The interrogators wanted information about Control and Jim's instructions, and they knew about the safe house and where it was located.

Jim finally ran out of stories and told a little man who sat with folded hands about the mole and that Stevcek might have known the identity. He also told him about the Tinker, Tailor code. Jim saw the man who he told the real information to once more. He wanted information mostly about Roy Bland but asked about Esterhase also. Smiley, knowing the little man was Karla, asked what he said about Smiley. He said the man showed him an engraved cigarette lighter.

Jim tells about Sarratt where Control didn't come. There were also no inquisitors, just somebody telling him about a teaching agency and his pension. Esterhase told him about the reorganization and Jim was ordered to keep quiet about what had happened. Toby had used the terms Tinker, Tailor and that Jim was to forget it all. Jim identifies the photo of the little man that Smiley shows him. The second photo was one of the interrogation team, who remained on the side lines. The second man was Polyakov. That night, Guillian drives Tarr to a ferry to Ireland. Guillian has broken up with Camilla and calls Toby Esterhase to arrange a meeting.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Jim tells Smiley how he developed his plans for handling the interrogation. He decided what he would and wouldn't tell the interrogators. Jim says that they weren't interested in the networks; they were interested in his meeting with Control at the safe house. Smiley finds that they even knew the address of the safe house. He also learns that Jim was interrogated by Karla. Smiley is particularly interested in what information Karla was seeking.

Smiley goes on to analyze the situation for Jim. The Russians found out that Control had narrowed the identity to five men. Jim later identifies pictures of Karla and Polyakov. Smiley knows that they are trying to find out how much Control knew about the mole, Gerald.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Smiley and Lacon are meeting with the Minister and give him the facts, and the Minister's want to know how bad the scandal will be. They will apply pressure to the Russians to contain the scandal. Jim takes an emergency leave due to his mother's illness. The other teachers have worked out a plan for covering his classes. Roach is also sick again, and his father is threatening to take him out of the school.

Chapter 33 Analysis

The Minister is concerned with the political ramifications of the possible scandal that could result from the information that Smiley and Lacon have reported to him. The Minister thinks that the Russians will try to make fools of them. They tell him not to worry because they too have information that they can release about the Russians.

Thurgood is angry that Jim Prideaux has disappeared. He said his mother was dying and he had to leave immediately, so the other teachers make plans to cover his classes. Bill Roach is sick again, and his father, the richest parent of the school, is threatening to take Bill out of Thurgood's. This is not sitting well with the head master.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Guilliam is at a safe house waiting for Toby Esterhase to arrive. George Smiley arrives and presents the scenario to Toby. Smiley tells Esterhase all the information he has figured out about the Witchcraft operation. Esterhase is nervous and says he does not want to listen. Smiley tells Esterhase Smiley has to report the information to Lacon and the Minister. They also want to know about the treatment of Westerby and Prideaux. Smiley says he only wants to know from whom the orders came and how did Esterhase know about Tinker and Tailor. Esterhase says Polyakov is their man. Smiley wants to know who Polyakov's agent inside the Circus is and Esterhase tells him to go to the big guys. Smiley says he thinks the other three give Esterhase the material and he delivers it. Smiley says he believes that Gerald is a Russian mole run by Karla.

Esterhase says that the Witchcraft affair put him in a very dangerous position and will do what he can to help Smiley. Esterhase reveals the location of the safe house and Smiley tells him to make arrangements for Smiley to spend the night there. Esterhase also gives them the procedure for contacting Polyakov and is told to take the weekend off since he will be at the safe house with Smiley. As they leave, Smiley has Guilliam check for surveillance and Guilliam thought he saw someone.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Guilliam has drawn Toby Esterhase to a safe house with a story about meeting a Pole. Instead, George Smiley arrives. He presents a scenario to Toby concerning Merlin. Smiley tells Esterhase that he wants information. Where did the orders come from for Connie Sachs, Max, Westerby and Prideaux? Who made the decisions? Esterhase tells him that they are funneling information to Moscow to protect Polyakov, who is their man. Smiley tells him that he believes that there is a mole in the Circus run by Karla.

Esterhase begins to come apart and talks about the dangerous position he was put in with the Witchcraft affair. "It's the perfect fix: you see that, don't you Toby, really?"/Smiley remarked in a quiet, rather distant way. 'Assuming it is a fix. It makes everyone wrong who's right; Connie Sachs, Jerry Westerby...Jim Prideaux...even Control. Silences the doubters before they've even spoken out... The permutations are infinite, one you've brought off the basic lie. Moscow Centre must be allowed to think she has an important Circus source; Whitehall on no account must get wind of the same notion. Take it to its logical conclusion and Gerald would have us strangling our own children in their beds. It would be beautiful in another context,' he remarked almost dreamily. 'Poor Toby: yes, I do see. What a time you must have been having, running between them all' (Chapter 34, pg. 324).



Esterhase gives them the address of the safe house and the procedure for contacting Polyakov. He agrees to make the arrangements for Smiley to spend the night there.

Smiley had detected surveillance when he looked out the window. He has Guilliam cover him as he leaves as they check for who is doing the watching. Guilliam sees several figures but he doesn't place any of them for several days.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Tarr holds the Paris contact at gunpoint saying he needed him to operate the coding machine. Steve sends the message for Tarr who says they have to wait for the response. Tarr is worried about the Russians trying to kill him. Steve tells him to worry more about the British than the Russians. Steve tells the clerk he has some communications to send but he will do it himself. In London, Mendel is using binoculars to study Circus headquarters. Mendel reports the comings and goings to Smiley. Two men carrying what looked like an ammunition box go in the building. A shuttle arrives with documents, just as Guillian had told him it would. Alleline arrives at eleven. Tinker had arrived. A few minutes later, Tailor and Soldier arrive. Roy Bland then arrives.

Chapter 35 Analysis

Smiley has Mendel watching the arrivals at the Circus. He knows who will arrive, and all four of them, Tinker, Tailor, Soldier and Bland come, all within a few minutes of each other. He knows that they have to have a meeting. Mendel is interested in who comes out first.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

George Smiley arrived at the safe house. She showed him around the house where all the mikes and spying equipment are. Guillian arrives and does something to the wiring.

Tarr received a return message from Alleline and told Ben to decipher it. The message says that Alleline needs samples of the product and that Tarr should talk to Steve Mackelvore.

Smiley is nervous and has his gun in his hand and wonders if Gerald has an emergency procedure that they don't know about. Mendel calls; someone has departed from the Circus, but he can't tell who. Smiley signals Guillian that the mole is on the way. A man enters the house and then Polyakov arrives. Smiley recognizes the voice of Bill Haydon reading the telegram that Smiley had drafted for Tarr to send from Paris. Guillian and Mendel enter the house and confront Haydon and Polyakov.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Events are taking place in both Paris and London. Ricki Tarr appeared in Paris and holds the resident Steve Mackelvore at gunpoint. He sends a message to Alleline and receives a reply that Alleline needs more information and proof of the product and tells him to talk to Mackelvore.

In London, Smiley, Mendel and Guillian are at the safe house, knowing that Esterhase has contacted Bland, Haydon, and Alleline. They are expecting the mole to appear. Bill Haydon arrives followed by Polyakov, who is told of the message from Tarr in Paris. They have drawn both men to the safe house.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Alleline and Bland also arrive at the house. Polyakov demands that his diplomatic status be respected. Haydon seems indifferent to the events taking place. Smiley confronts them by playing the tapes. Lacon, Esterhase and Fawn arrive. Smiley's point of view was that Haydon was the one way they could reach Karla. The group of four with Polyakov discuss the situation and they announce that they will meet again at the house in three days to give Polyakov time to consult his superiors. Then the departures began. Esterhase has a strangely emotional farewell with Polyakov and then leaves with Bland. Polyakov left without saying goodbye to anyone. Alleline instructed the Circus staff to contact Tarr to return to London where he would face no recriminations. A van arrives with to pick up Haydon. Alleline took an indefinite leave and Smiley was asked to return to work at the Circus.

Chapter 37 Analysis

The events at the house result in Alleline and Bland arriving with Lacon, Esterhase and Fawn arriving in a separate group after them. Smiley's plan is for them to deal with Karla through Polyakov. They decide to meet in three days, which gives Polyakov time to consult with his superiors. The goodbyes are strange with a van manned by inquisitors arriving to pick up Haydon.

Guilliam is struck by the hatred Polyakov has for everyone there, even Mrs. McCraig. It was not until much later that he identified the shadow he saw that night.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Lacon asks Smiley to take over at the Circus until they could find a replacement for Alleline. He tells them to keep an eye on Haydon, who is being interrogated at Sarratt. They have plans to send him to Russia. Lacon arrives the next day to tell him that Haydon wants to talk with Smiley. He will only give an account of his activities if Smiley did the questioning. Haydon read from notes he had prepared. Haydon knows he is being traded to Russia and tells Smiley to hurry it up. He tells Smiley that he can't take his girlfriend with him and gives him a check for her. Smiley goes to see the girl and tells her that Haydon is away on a secret mission and that she should forget him. Smiley returned to Bywater Street via taxi and felt he was being followed. He calls Mendel to check the taxi number but Mendel is out.

Smiley meets with Haydon again the next day. Haydon tells him he will be leaving in a day or two for Moscow and that all the details have been worked out. He wants any money owed him forwarded to Moscow. Haydon rattles off a list of things he would like Smiley to take care of for him but he wouldn't tell Smiley of his recruitment or relationship with Karla. He says the Suez incident was responsible for him becoming a full-time mole for the Russians, and he received his Soviet citizenship in 1961.

Both Karla and Haydon knew that Control was suspicious during the period before Merlin. Control had almost trapped Gerald on two occasions, so they devised Merlin and Operation Testify. Witchcraft would guarantee that Alleline would be in charge when Control departed. The Russians could also control what information was leaked to the British. Much of the information provided was fabricated to fit the needs of Whitehall. Haydon also tells him that Testify was a setup. Control had narrowed the field to a handful of people. There was a real General Stevcek but he never made any offer to the British. That night Lacon and Sercombe arrive at the Bywater Street house to pick up Smiley. Hayden had been found in the garden with his neck broken. Smiley says it isn't the Russians who killed Haydon because they pride themselves on having their people returned.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Smiley is asked back to the Circus to fill in for Alleline until a replacement is found. He is also told by Lacon that Haydon won't talk to the inquisitors and wants Smiley to handle the task. Smiley learns some details from Haydon but Smiley is aware that Haydon is picking what he chooses to reveal. Witchcraft was designed to protect Haydon and to put Alleline in line for the top job. They could also control the information that was fed to the British. Haydon tells him that Testify was a setup.



Haydon did show a little emotion when he talked about Jim Prideaux and then became defensive saying that he managed to get Prideaux back to England. As long as Jim was being held, people would be raising the subject trying to get him back. Once Jim was in England, they would let the matter drop.

Smiley also learns that Haydon's affair with Ann was Karla's idea. Once it was known around the Circus, it would be known that Smiley's attitude toward Haydon was biased. Karla felt that this would function as a means of protection for Haydon.

That night Haydon is found dead with his neck broken. It isn't the Russians because they always pride themselves on getting their people back once their cover is blown. Smiley says that Karla won't do the deal now.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Smiley is traveling in a first-class train compartment and thinking of Bill Haydon and all the contradictions in his story. He is on his way to Immingham to see Ann. He sees her drive up.

Jim Prideaux returned to Thurgood's. He gave up golf and his walks and stayed in his trailer most of the time. They attributed the change in his behavior to his mother's death. He eventually became his old self, and Bill Roach convinced himself that he had dreamed of the gun.

Chapter 39 Analysis

Smiley has to tell Ann about Bill Haydon and travels by train to Immingham to do so. On the way, he thinks about the contradictions in Bill Haydon's story. He had wired Ann that he was coming and hopes that she will meet him. She does.

Jim Prideaux resumes his teaching duties at Thurgood's although it takes him a while to recover from the death of his mother. Bill Roach convinces himself that the incident with the gun never happened and life returns to normal.



Characters

George Smiley

George Smiley is a middle-aged man, who is separated from his wife, Ann. Although he is living partly on a pension, he is financially secure. He had been educated at Oxford and had worked at The Circus, which was British intelligence. Smiley has had a successful career in intelligence. One of his jobs had been in recruitment so he knew a lot of the agents.

Smiley didn't retire voluntarily: he was let go at the same time as his superior and many others. This was the result of problems between Control and Percy Alleline. Smiley was known as Control's man, so when Control lost his job, so did Smiley. There were also botched operations with Control trying to find a mole before he left the service. Smiley knew of the Czech incident and felt that the agent was betrayed, but he didn't know the details of the events. This is the affair that precipitated the end of Control's tenure and ultimately led to Smiley's own dismissal.

Although he is retired, he is summoned to a meeting and told of a strange incident that occurred in Hong Kong. An agent has been told that there is a Russian mole in the highest level of the British intelligence service. Smiley comes out of retirement to hunt the mole. Smiley has many contacts from his days in intelligence, many of whom were let go when he was. He was a well-trained and successful agent. He knows how to search for information and how to interpret the information that he finds. Since he knows the procedures at the Circus, he also knows how to get around them. He gathers the information and analyzes it using all of his skills to hunt the mole, who is code-named Gerald.

Ricki Tarr

Ricki Tarr is an agent who had been recruited in Djakarta. His father had been an Australian solicitor who lived in Penang when he met his mother, an actress who was on tour. When Ricki was a child, his parents were sent to Singapore during the WWII and were captured and imprisoned by the Japanese. They returned to Penang after the war, and the teenage Ricki fled to Borneo. Ricki became a gunrunner and was recruited by British intelligence.

Tarr was known as accident-prone in intelligence circles, which meant he caused several incidents that became or almost became public knowledge. In Hong Kong he meets a woman from a Russian trade delegation named Irina who wants to defect. London does not respond promptly to his messages about Irina's possible defection for twenty-four hours, at which time London requests specific information on Irina's contacts at Moscow Centre. Ricki discovers that Irina has disappeared and that an unscheduled Russian plane departed from the Hong Kong airport.



Tarr flees from Hong Kong and doesn't report to his superior. He lays low for six months, hiding out in Kuala Lumpur with his daughter and her mother. When he travels to London and tells his superior the story of what happened in Hong Kong, he is asked to tell the story to George Smiley at the residence of Lacon, an advisor to the Cabinet Office.

He appears at the end of the novel to help draw the mole to the safe-house.

Jim Prideaux

Jim Prideaux was a teacher. He arrived at Thurgood's school on a Friday afternoon in a thunderstorm and drives his car and trailer into the Dip, which is a big hole. He is supposed to teach until the end of the term but stays longer. The boys give him the nickname of Rhino. Prideaux is actually an inactive British intelligence agent, who's code name is Ellis. He was shot in the back when he was in Czechoslovakia and is recovering. The shooting was the result of a betrayal within the ranks of British intelligence and a set-up by the Russians.

Peter Guilliam

Peter Guilliam is the son of a French businessman, who had spied for the British during WWII, and an Englishwoman who had worked with codes. Guilliam works for the Circus as head of the scalp-hunters. He had worked in French North Africa until his cover was blown eight years earlier. It is Guilliam who brought Smiley to Lacon's residence where he was told about the mole, and it is Guilliam who obtains the documents and information that Smiley needs from inside the Circus. This means that Guilliam has to breach the procedures of the Circus.

Percy Alleline

Percy Alleline is the chief of intelligence who replaced the person known as Control. He was from the Scottish lower class and had attended Cambridge. He worked for the Circus undercover in South America. From there he went to India and then to Cairo. A scandal involving the Americans brought on the battle between Percy and Control, and Alleline was assigned to training recruits at the "Nursery." Alleline told Bill Haydon that they better create a good job for Alleline. He recruited the agent Merlin who was responsible for the intelligence provided in Operation Witchcraft. He takes an indefinite leave after the outcome of Smiley's investigation.

Irina

Irina was the common-law wife of Boris. She was a textile buyer and a Soviet trade delegate in Hong Kong. She was teamed with Boris during training. After meeting Tarr, who she knows as Thomas, she tells him that she wants to defect and has information



that is intended for Percy Alleline, the head of British intelligence. She leaves a diary at a dead letter drop in a church in Hong Kong. In the diary, she explains how a co-worker at Moscow Centre told her of an important KGB agent called Karla, who was the control for a highly-placed spy at the Circus named Gerald. Irina disappears while Tarr is trying to make arrangement for her defection.

Karla

Karla is an important KGB agent who recruited the mole named Gerald. Karla functions as the control for Gerald. According to Smiley, Karla began his career in 1936, in Franco's Spain where he recruited a number of agents. In World War II, he ran networks behind enemy lines. He may also have been in England for a period of six months. Gerald might know what name and cover Karla used then. Karla was caught up in a purge and spent some prison time in Siberia in 1948. He was arrested in India on immigration charges in 1955, and had just come from America. He is a Soviet master spy.

Jerry Westerby

Jerry Westerby is a sports journalist. Since his job required a lot of travel, he often did small jobs for the Circus. When he was in Prague, he heard a story about Ellis from a man who was in the army. The Russians had been waiting for the British agent. He relayed the information to Toby Esterhase who said the story was a plant and wouldn't even allow Jerry to write the story for his newspaper. Westerby sent the information to Smiley via letter. Westerby hasn't had any assignments from the Circus since his last meeting with Esterhase over a year ago.

Roy Bland

Roy Bland was an agent who had been recruited by Smiley. His father, a trade-union member and Party member, had made life difficult for Roy after the death of his mother. Bland had to work his way through school and attended training sessions at the Nursery during his off time from school. His cover was as a leftist intellectual, and he obtained an economics teaching position at the University of Poznan. From Poznan he went to the Budapest Academy of Sciences. He also taught in Prague, Sofia and Kiev. The Circus cared for him when he suffered a nervous breakdown and gave him a desk job in London. He is one of the four pointed out by Control as being involved in Operation Witchcraft.

Aleksey Polyakov

Aleksey Polyakov is a Soviet agent trained by Karla. His real name is Colonel Gregor Viktorov. He graduated from Leningrad State University; his cover at the Russian embassy in London was as cultural attaché. He lived in Highgate and serviced the mole



known as Gerald. He was in charge of briefing and debriefing the mole. The British learn of him through Ricki Tarr, who tried to bring in a defector from a Russian trade delegation in Hong Kong named Irina. She had a friend named Ivlov, known as Lapin, who worked at the embassy for him.

Sam Collins

Sam Collins is a former Circus employee who had been duty officer the night that Jim Prideaux was shot. He had just returned from three years in Vientiane and is asked by Control to be the duty officer on the night that Jim Prideaux is shot. He makes the arrangements with the regular. After the incident he went on two months vacation to the south of France. He was dismissed from the Circus when he returned and now works as a bookie.

Oliver Lacon

Oliver Lacon is a senior advisor at the Cabinet Office. He lives on an estate in Ascot. This is where the meeting between Lacon, Guillian, Smiley and Tarr takes place and where Smiley learns the details of the Hong Kong affair and the possibility of a highly-placed mole in British intelligence. Lacon is the one who wouldn't listen to Smiley, who had suggested the possibility of a mole the previous year.

Toby Esterhase

Toby Esterhase is a Circus employee who is in charge of the group known as the Lamplighters. His group provided support services for the various operations. This meant that they were in charge of safe-houses and surveillance. Esterhase had been recruited by Smiley in Vienna. He is one of the four pointed out by Control as being involved in Operation Witchcraft, which is how Smiley caught him in a lie.

Max

Max was a Czech who worked at the Circus. Jim Prideaux had asked for his help for a special job that was run from the top. He was in Brno when Jim was shot and followed Jim's instruction to return to London if Jim failed to show by Monday. He thinks that Jim informed on the Czech network to gain his own release from prison and is bitter about the nine members of the network that were killed.

Bill Haydon

Bill Haydon is the head of London Station and a cousin of George Smiley's wife Ann. He has also been having an affair with Ann. London Station is the operational division of British intelligence. Haydon had been educated at Oxford, where he was known as a



right-winger. He is one of the four pointed out by Control as being involved in Operation Witchcraft.

Bill Roach

Bill Roach is a student at Thurgood's, which is his second prep school in two terms. He is not considered to be a good student, but his father is probably the richest parent of all of the students, so Bill continues at the school. His feelings of inadequacy and need for acceptance are obvious. He is nicknamed Jumbo by Jim Prideaux.

Boris

Boris was a Soviet trade delegate in Hong Kong who attracted the attention of the Hong Kong resident British agent. Because of his behavior and the lack of Soviet guards, Tarr identified Boris as a trained KGB agent. He is too highly-placed for the scalp-hunter to handle. During his training days, Boris was teamed with Irina.

Connie Sachs

Connie Sachs is an elderly lady who teaches at Oxford. She is a retired researcher from the Circus. Like others, she was let go when Control and Smiley were fired. She has a good memory and is able to give Smiley information about Aleksey Polyakov.

Roddy Martindale

Roddy Martindale works for the Foreign Office where his job is to entertain lesser foreign dignitaries. He is a bachelor who worked for Whitehall for a short time.

Gerald

Gerald is the code named of a highly-placed mole working at the Circus. His control at Moscow Centre is Karla.

Ann Smiley

Ann is the wife of George Smiley and the cousin of Bill Haydon and Miles Sercombe.

Jim Ellis

Ellis is the name that Jim Prideaux used in his intelligence work.



Objects/Places

Thurgood's

Thurgoods is a boys' prep school located near Taunton, England.

London

London is the scene of most of the action of the novel. It is where George Smiley lives and where British Intelligence is located.

The Circus

The Circus is the name used to refer to British Intelligence because of its location in Cambridge Circus.

Bywater Street

The address of Smiley's London house is 117 Bywater Street.

Brixton

Scalp-hunters, whose official name is Travel, is a part of British intelligence. They handle surveillance work that is too messy for other agents. They are headquartered in a Brixton school house.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is the Asian city where a Soviet trade delegation visited and one of the members of the delegation, Boris, attracted the attention of the British resident agent.

Dzerhinsky Square

Dzerhinsky Square is in Moscow. It is the location of the KGB headquarters.

Whitehall

Whitehall is the name used to designate the Cabinet Office and the British government.

Ascot

Ascot is where Oliver Lacon lives. It is where Smiley is summoned to a meeting and told of the possibility of a highly-placed mole within the Circus.

Hotel Islay

The Hotel Islay is located in Sussex Gardens and the operational headquarters of George Smiley during his search for the mole.

Social Concerns And Themes

As in all of John le Carre's novels, the setting of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* was a subject of political and social concern when it was written. Here le Carre treats East-West relations, particularly with Russia. Although the setting is the familiar world of the "Circus" (British Intelligence Headquarters in London), there are perceptive rambles into a Czech prison, Moscow Centre on Dzerzhinsky Square, and a Hong Kong hotel, with references to the Soviet presence in Czechoslovakia, and to the general atmosphere of devious dealings and double agents, called "moles." It is espionage at its crudest; a story of traitors that mirrors the whole of human relations. The novel was suggested by the real story of the double agent Kim Philby who was unmasked in the early 1960s.

As in his previous works, le Carre treats the question of ambiguous loyalties, of dubious allegiances, both in the world of spies and of nonspies. The inability to trust, to commit oneself, whether it be in love or in politics, very well exemplified by Smiley's unfaithful wife Ann, evokes the contemporary social situation.

Whether one becomes a double agent through hatred of two countries, or two partners, or through love of them both, or from simple apathy, is a difficult philosophical question, not answered, but posed in this work.



Techniques

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy is a very complex novel, with numerous characters, some of whom are not developed; others emerge with some depth, but like all of his people, are never totally alive. He likes to mention them briefly in one work, so that like an index card he can pull them out again in a future work if they appeal to him. The plot of this work is equally complex, suggesting many phases of espionage, from "moles" to watchers. In developing the story, le Carre weaves a small portion, drops the threads, and returns only after many other pieces have been begun or continued. To the less careful reader's consternation, he leaves out many pieces. His work is very slowmoving, but keeps the reader in suspense until the very end. In his novel, he makes use of an engrossing subplot, Jim Prideaux's brief teaching career at Thursgood's school, and his relations with the seemingly odd youngster Bill Roach.

Particularly gifted in dialogue, le Carre does not engage in elaborate descriptions.

He does, however, give realistic glimpses of London and, in fact, uses photographs to ascertain the atmosphere of the Circus area. It is however the dialogue and the lively use of language that carries one through the slow-moving sections and creates the feeling of suspense. Although the characters never emerge as totally convincing people, one reason being that they are too numerous, the style in which they speak gives them individuality. Reviewers considered Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, a New York Times best seller for thirty-two weeks, a rich panorama of characters and an able piece, handling the present through flashbacks to the past, due mainly to Smiley's prodigious memory. It is the book in which le Carre reveals possibly the most about the Intelligence Establishment, while most clearly presenting the problems inherent with espionage.



Themes

Suspense

One of the themes running through the book is suspense. The reader is prepared for the suspense right from the beginning just knowing they are reading a John Le Carre novel. It begins with the Russian trade delegation in Hong Kong and what is happening with Irina and Tarr and whether or not Tarr will get Irina out in time. Irina is the woman who gave the information about the existence of a mole in the upper echelons of the Circus.

The most suspense centers around the mole, Gerald, and Smiley's methodical research and investigation as Smiley tries to flush out a traitor in British intelligence. We follow Guilliam from step to step as Guilliam smuggles out various documents about Operation Witchcraft and Operation Testify and wonder if Guilliam will be caught with the documents from the Circus Archives. The question of the identity of the mole is, of course, the subject of the book.

Almost every incident that takes place in the book is surrounded by suspense. Smiley is working outside the boundaries of official Circus procedures, and there is always the chance that he or those working with him will be caught.

Suspicion

Suspicion is another underlying theme of the book. It is also a part of the profession of most of the characters and often their lives depend on their being suspicious. They are always aware and alert as to what is going on around them and whether or not they are being watched or followed. In some circles this would be called paranoia, but it is a normal part of the spy profession.

Many times throughout the book Smiley has people watching to see if there is a tail on him. He has Mendel or Guilliam follow him to watch for any surveillance. Many of the characters such as Smiley and Guilliam feel they are being watched or followed but can't find the tail. At the safe house with Esterhase, Smiley kept looking out the window and asking Esterhase if any of his lamplighters were out there. When they leave the house, Guilliam, who is following Smiley, senses the presence of someone and sees shadows, but doesn't recognize who it is until weeks later.

Jim Prideaux has his students watching for anyone who is asking questions about him. Prideaux himself watches the places where strangers would go to ask questions. If he didn't, he wouldn't have known that someone came down from London and requested voters' lists. He regularly looks out the windows checking the grounds for strangers, or he wouldn't have spotted Smiley and his car near the church.



In many cases, staying alive is the result of being suspicious for many of the characters in this profession. They can't be trusting of strangers and still survive.

Bitterness

Bitterness is another theme that recurs throughout the book. A lot of the bitterness is directed at the Circus because many people were dismissed during the reorganization. Connie Sachs feels a lot of bitterness for her dismissal and she tells Smiley that. Smiley himself was dismissed during the reorganization and he also is somewhat bitter. But Smiley knew of the power struggle that was taking place between Control and Percy Alleline. He also knows of the existence of the mole and that that was a reason for his dismissal. Many of the people who were dismissed were a threat to the mole because of information or suspicions that they had.

Much of Smiley's bitterness stems from his relationship with his wife Ann. He is separated from Ann and very bitter about that fact. Ann had been having an affair with Bill Haydon, her cousin, and one of the Circus upper echelons. This made for a tense relationship between Bill Haydon and Smiley. Smiley finds out later that Haydon was ordered by Karla to have the affair with Ann because Smiley was the biggest danger to Haydon.

Smiley thinks of his wife on and off throughout the book. Sometimes he wants her back; sometimes he doesn't. Obviously, he resents her lover.



Style

Point of View

The book is written in the third person point of view with the narrator being the author. Le Carre is a former intelligence officer, so he is very knowledgeable about the profession and imparts this knowledge to his characters. Almost all of the characters in the book are a part of the intelligence profession.

The point of view for the most part is objective and mostly presented by Smiley. Smiley has to be objective and methodical in his research in order to find the mole. He has to try to separate his own feelings and views from the facts as he pours over documents looking for information. He has to use this information objectively to draw his own conclusions as to who is or isn't the traitor.

The use of the third person allows the reader to know of events that happen outside of the presence of the main character. If the book were written in the first person with Smiley as the narrator, the reader's knowledge of events would be confined to what Smiley knew.

Setting

There are various settings for the action of the novel. Taunton, England is where the novel begins when Jim Prideaux arrives at Thurgood's. Taunton is returned to at various times during the novel, since Prideaux is the retired spy who was betrayed by the mole and shot and arrested in Czechoslovakia. When the story of Operation Testify is told, the setting is in Czechoslovakia and Russia where Jim is shot and captured and interrogated by Karla, among others.

Hong Kong is another site of action for the novel. This is where the Russian Trade Delegation is when Tarr comes into contact with Irina. They go to various places in Hong Kong as they talk. It is Irina who leaves a diary in a church letter drop that gives Tarr the information about the mole known as Gerald.

The setting for most of the action of the novel is in London. This is where Smiley lives and where Circus headquarters is. There is some travel to other parts of England as Smiley interviews former employees.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in a style that is appropriate to the novel. There are special terms used to that are specific to the spy profession, such as cover, fallbacks and dead letter drops, as well as the nicknames for the various departments. The headquarters is known as the Circus; the training facility is known as the Nursery. There are also terms



for the staff. Control was the head of the Circus before Alleline. The janitors are the guards and watchmen; the mothers are the secretaries.

The use of these special terms adds to the realism of the story. In many cases they are not defined, but they are obvious enough for the reader to pick up the meaning of the terms. The novel would not have the same impact without the use of the spy jargon.

Aside from the use of jargon, the book is written in clear, everyday English that is easy for the reader to follow and understand. The reader learns to pick out the jargon as he/she reads.

Structure

The structure of the novel is simple. There are thirty-nine chapters that vary in length from two or three pages to seventeen to eighteen pages. Except for the interviews of characters such as Connie Sachs and Jim Prideaux, each chapter is a complete scenario. The interviews of some of the characters are presented in two or three chapters, since they are telling a long story, but the chapters again express a complete scenario.

There is no Table of Contents in the book, which is divided into three parts. These parts do not affect the action of the novel and are basically the beginning, middle and end of the action.

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy is a well-written, well-put-together book that holds the reader's interest. There is no part of the book where the reader becomes bored. Le Carre wrote the book with the intention of it being turned into a movie for television, so the action is condensed with no lulls. It is a fast-paced novel that is worth the reader's time.



Quotes

"Spikely did not, so Jim seized a crayon and drew a globe. To the west, America, he said, full of greedy fools fouling up their inheritance. To the east, China-Russia; he drew no distinction: boiler suits prison camps, and a damn long march to nowhere. In the middle..." (Chapter 1, pgs. 12-13)

"'Sheer lack of will-power,' he told himself as he courteously declined the suggestions of a lady in a doorway. 'One calls it politeness, whereas in fact it is nothing but weakness. You featherhead, Martindale. You pompous, bogus, effeminate, non-productive -' He stepped widely to avoid an unseen obstacle. 'Weakness,' he resumed, 'and an inability to live a self-sufficient life independent of institutions' - a puddle emptied itself neatly into his shoe - 'and emotional attachments that have long outlived their purpose. Viz., my wife; viz., the Circus; viz., living in London. Taxi!" (Chapter 3, pg. 25)

"Once more it was Smiley's turn to receive the heat of Tarr's charm: 'So what's it all about, Mr. Smiley? See what I mean? It's little things I'm noticing,' he confided, still to Smiley. 'Just take the way he sat. Believe me, sir, if we'd been in that place ourselves we couldn't have sat better than Boris. He had the pick of the exits and the stairway; he had a fine view of the main entrance and the action; he was right-handed and he was covered by a left-hand wall. Boris was a professional, Mr. Smiley; there was no doubt of it whatsoever. He was waiting for a connect, working a letterbox maybe, or trailing his coat and looking for a pass from a mug like me. Well, now listen: it's one thing to burn a small-time trade delegate. It's quite a different ball game to swing your legs at a Centre-trained hood - right Mr. Guillian?'" (Chapter 5, pg. 40)

"'All I knew was Irina wanted to defect - talk to Percy, as she called it. She had three days left, and sooner she jumped the better for everybody. If I waited much longer, she was going to talk herself out of it. So I took the plunge and walked in on Thesinger, first thing while he was opening up the shop.'" (Chapter 7, pg. 49)

"The truth was he had worked for Karla as a helper in one of Karla's great conspiracies and he had actually been stationed in England in a conspiratorial capacity, under the cover of being a driver and assistant coding clerk at the Embassy. For this task he was provided with the workname Lapin. Thus Brod became Ivlov and Ivlov became Lapin: of this poor Ivlov was extremely proud.... Ivlov's task was to service a mole." (Chapter 8, pg. 59)

"'Don't worry, Mr. Smiley,' Tarr retorted, taking it back; 'it's not made in Russia.' By the time he reached the door, his smile had returned. 'You know something?' he said, addressing all three of them down the aisle of the long room. 'If Irina is right, you boys are going to need a whole new Circus. So if we all stick together I guess we could be in on the ground floor.'" (Chapter 9, pg. 68)



"That's the point, isn't it?' Lacon observed quickly. His strength was improbable, Smiley reflected. One minute he was like a thin, drooping boxer whose gloves were too big for his wrists; the next he had reached out and rocked you against the ropes, and was surveying you with Christian compassion. 'We can't move. We can't investigate because all the instruments of enquiry are in the Circus's hands, perhaps in the mole Gerald's. We can't watch, or listen or open mail. To do any one of those things would require the resources of Esterhase's lamplighters, and Esterhase like anyone else must be suspect. We can't interrogate; we can't take steps to limit a particular person's access to delicate secrets. To do any of these things would be to run the risk of alarming the mole. It's the oldest question of all, George. Who can spy on the spies? Who can smell out the fox without running with him?'" (Chapter 10, pgs. 72-73)

"Move. Once you stop, you never start again: there is a special stage-fright that can make you dry up and walk away, that burns your fingers when you touch the goods and turns your stomach to water. Move." (Chapter 11, pg. 91)

"He had that art, from miles and miles of secret life, of listening at the front of his mind; of letting the primary incidents unroll directly before him while another, quite separate faculty wrestled with their historical connection. The connection ran through Tarr to Irina, through Irina to her poor lover who was so proud of being called Lapin, and of serving one Colonel Gregor Viktorov 'whose workname at the Embassy was Polyakov.' In his memory, these things were like part of a childhood: he would never forget them." (Chapter 12, pg. 104)

"In which boast he was pardonable mistaken, for he could hardly be expected to know of Jim's recruitment of the entire car club; or the means by which Jim was able subsequently to trace the path of Mendel's wary investigations. Nor could Mendel, or anyone else, have guessed the state of electric alertness to which anger, and the strain of waiting, and perhaps a little madness, had seemingly brought Jim." (Chapter 15, pg. 125)

"It was this long and cruel war that in its main battles Smiley now relived as he embarked upon his reading. The files contained only the thinnest record of it; his memory contained far more. Its protagonists were Alleline and Control, its origins misty. Bill Haydon - a keen, if saddened, follower of those events- maintained that the two men learned to hate each other at Cambridge during Control's brief spell as a don and Alleline's as an undergraduate. According to Bill, Alleline was Control's pupil and a bad one, and Control taunted him, which he certainly might have." (Chapter 16, pg.129)

"So Smiley carried off the consolation prize - a costly scent, smuggled he assumed, by one of Toby's homing lamplighters - and took his beggar bowl to Band, knowing as he did so the he was coming one step nearer to Haydon." (Chapter 17, pg. 149)

"Perhaps Bill really is out of scale, Smiley thought hopelessly, still grappling for a sense of proportion. Picturing him now, and putting him beside Bland, Esterhase, even Alleline, it did truthfully seem to Smiley that all of them were, to a great or small extent, imperfect



imitations, of that one original, Haydon. That their affectations were like steps towards the same unobtainable ideal of the rounded man, even if the ideal was itself misconceived, or misplaced; even if Bill was utterly unworthy of it. Bland in his blunt impertinence, Esterhase in his lofty artificial Englishness, Alleline with his shallow gift of leadership - without Bill they were disarray. Smiley also knew, or thought he knew - the idea came to him now as a mild enlightenment - that Bill in turn was also very little by himself; that while his admirers (Bland, Prideaux, Alleline, Esterhase, and all the rest of the supporters' club) might find in him completeness, Bill's real trick was to use them, to live through them to complete himself, here a piece, there a piece, from their passive identities, thus disguising the fact that he was less, far less, than the sum of his apparent qualities...and finally submerging this dependence beneath an artist's arrogance, calling them the creatures of his mind..." (Chapter 18, pg. 156)

"A sickening notion had struck him: it seemed so neat and so horribly obvious that he could only wonder why it had come to him so late. Sand was Camilla's husband. She was living a double life. Now whole new vistas of deceit opened before him. His friends, his loves, even the Circus itself; joined and re-formed in endless patterns of intrigue. A line of Mendel's came back to him, dropped two nights ago as they drank beer in some glum suburban pub: 'Cheer up, Peter, old son. Jesus Christ only had twelve, you know, and one of them was a double.'

Tarr, he thought. That bastard Ricki Tarr." (Chapter 21, pg. 187)

"Gerstmann flew on to Delhi unaware, and he was still unaware when I arrived at Delhi jail to sell him a piece of insurance, as Control called it. His choice was very simple. There could not be the slightest doubt, on present form, that Gerstmann's head was on the block in Moscow, where to save his own neck. Rudnev was busy denouncing him for blowing the San Francisco network. The affair had made a great splash in the States, and Moscow was very angry at the publicity. I had with me the American press photographs of the arrest, even of the radio set Karla had imported and the signal plans he had cached before he left. You know how prickly we all become when things get into the papers." (Chapter 23, pg. 202)

"All his awareness was behind him, fixed on the black revolver and the bands of chamois leather; on the pen-tops that turned to bullets as Jim threaded them methodically into the chamber, his lined face tipped towards the lamplight, pale and slightly squinting in the dazzle." (Chapter 24, pg. 221)

"Jim said there was a special job going, something so big, so secret that no one else in the Circus, not even Toby Esterhase, was allowed to know that it was taking Place. It came from the very top of the tree and it was hairy. Was Max interested?" (Chapter 27, pgs. 242-243)

"All the same, Jerry always kept an ear to the ground when he went there; after all, it



was Czecho, and once or twice he'd been able to bring back the odd snippet for Toby or put him onto the track of someone." (Chapter 28, pg. 253)

"Yes, fancy that, Jim agreed, and, from then on, made his dispositions. He bought railway tickets to places - Taunton to Exeter, Taunton to London, Taunton to Swindon, valid one month - because he knew that if he were on the run again, tickets would be hard to come by. He had uncached his old identities and his gun, and hid them handily above ground; he dumped a suitcase full of cloths in the boot of the Alvis, and kept the tank full. These precautions eased his fears a little, make sleep a possibility; or would have done, before his back." (Chapter 30, pg. 273)

"They're blown. The story is you blew them to save your own skin. I don't believe it. But I have to know what happened.' He went on, 'I know Control made you promise by all that's holy, but that's finished. I know you've been questioned to death and I know you've pushed some things so far down you can hardly find them any more or tell the difference between truth and cover. I know you've tried to draw a line under it and say it didn't happen. I've tried that, too. Well, after tonight you can draw your line. I've brought a letter from Lacon and if you want to ring him he's standing by. I don't want to silence you. I'd rather you talked. Why didn't you home and see me at home when you got back? You could have done. You tried to see me before you left, so why not when you got back? Wasn't just the rules that kept you away." (Chapter 31. pg. 278)

"They were working him on the production-line principle, he explained: no sleep, relays of questions, a lot of disorientation, a lot of muscle, till the interrogation became to him a slow race between going a bit dotty, as he called it, and breaking completely. Naturally, he hoped he'd go dotty but that wasn't something you could decide for yourself, because they had a way of bringing you back. A lot of the muscle was done electrically." (Chapter 32, pg. 296)

"The question, Guilliam saw, mattered very much to Smiley: he had played the whole long hand in order to arrive at it. As Guilliam waited, his eyes now on Esterhase, who was by no means so confident any more, now on Smiley's mandarin face, he realized that he, to, was beginning to understand the shape of Karla's last clever knot, as Smiley had called it - and of his own grueling interview with Alleline." (Chapter 34, pg. 321)

"The night had its own madness after that; events ran too quickly for him to fasten on them singly. Not till days afterwards did he realize that the figure, or the shadow of it, had struck a chord of familiarity in his memory. Even then, for some time, he could not place it. Then one early morning, waking abruptly, he had it clear in his mind: a barking military voice, a gentleness of manner heavily concealed, a squash racket jammed behind the safe of his room in Brixton, which brought tears to the eyes of his unemotional secretary." (Chapter 34, pg. 327)

"His mood was subdued, even a little glum. Like an actor, he had a sense of approaching anti-climax before the curtain went up, a sense of great things dwindling to a small, mean end; as death itself seemed small and mean to him after the struggles of



his life. He had no sense of conquest that he knew of. His thoughts, as often when he was afraid, concerned people. He had to theories or judgments in particular. He simply wondered how everyone would be affected; and he felt responsible." (Chapter 36, pg. 340)

"Meanwhile both Karla and Haydon were receiving signals that control was smelling a rat. Control was ill, of course, but clearly he would never willingly give up the reins while there was a chance that he was making Karla a present of the service. It was a race between Control's researches and his health. Twice he had very nearly struck gold - again Haydon declined to say how - and if Karla had not been quick in his feel, the mole Gerald would have been trapped. It was out of this nervy situation that first Merlin and finally Operation Testify were born." (Chapter 38, pg. 360)

"For a long, long while Haydon hesitated, then did not answer. But the answer was written there, all the same: in the sudden emptying of his eyes, in the shadow of guilt that crossed his face. He came to warn you, Smiley thought; because he loved you. To warn you; just as he came to tell me that control was mad, but couldn't find me because I was in Berlin. Jim was watching your back for you right till the end." (Chapter 38, pg. 362)

Adaptations

The Smiley trilogy became more famous through the television presentations in 1982 starring Alec Guinness, where it was seen by more than twentyfive million people. Guinness gave Smiley a flesh-and-blood personality and endeared him to audiences in a way that le Carre was not able to do. Le Carre never entered into the filming of these works, and thus another interpretation emerged.

For awhile, he maintained that the popular television personality of Smiley prevented him from continuing with any further Smiley stories. Alec Guinness, he says, "took Smiley away from me." People now had a picture of Smiley different from the one he had given him, and it would be hard for him to return to his story. Even so, le Carre returned to Smiley in novels such as *The Secret Pilgrim* and would even credit Guinness with helping him deepen his characterization of Smiley.



Key Questions

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy is an exceptionally complex work, rich in themes that invite discussion. A good beginning for a discussion might be the characterization of Smiley, the tired, battered, betrayed-on-all-sides, yet faithful spy. He has been abused mightily by the Circus; his hard work has usually gone unrewarded. Yet, he returns to work, bucking a system that values appearances more than truth, in order to ferret out a mole who has betrayed, as the tale reveals, even his most faithful friends, because of his vague dislike of the British culture. Smiley is a member of that culture, and he has been betrayed by it as much as by the foreign agents that he battles in secret.

Betrayed on all sides, Smiley seems representative of how people bear the weight of betrayal, disappointment, and unappreciation. Through him, the themes of Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy are made palpable—they become realistic because he seems real. What in Smiley may be said to be common to humanity? Are his responses to his discoveries typical of how most human beings respond to cruelties beyond their control? Is it possible that we readers understand his struggles because they are not alien intrigues but representations of our own day-to-day struggles to separate truth from lies? Do we root for him because he has an opportunity to fight back, to unveil the betrayers for what they really are?

1. Smiley is a celebrated literary figure.

Is he a fully realized, three-dimensional character? How does le Carre build his characterization?

2. Smiley makes other appearances in le Carre's fiction, not always as the main character. Does he change in these other books, or is he a consistent figure, old and molded by decades of experience?

3. Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy and its sequels were made into three television miniseries, each starring Alec Guinness.

At first, le Carre was unhappy with Guinness's characterization, yet he later credited Guinness's portrayal with helping him deepen Smiley's characterization in his fiction. What does Guinness bring to the role that may go beyond what le Carre originally intended? Is Guinness's portrayal in Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy similar to what you envisioned when you read the novel?

4. What are the different forms of betrayal in the novel? How many instances of betrayal are there? Are all the betrayers similar to each other? Does the evil they do vary with the form of their betrayals? Is one kind of betrayal worse than another?

5. When the Soviet Union's empire collapsed, a host of literary reviewers proclaimed the death of le Carre's career, declaring that with the end of the Cold War, he had nothing left to write about.



Are the universals of the human condition such that *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, a tale set in the intrigues of the Cold War, will survive as literature and continue to be read, even by audiences that do not remember the Cold War?

6. Is the climax of the novel a fitting one? How does it affect the novel's themes? Was it inevitable that a lifetime of betraying people would result in someone lashing back? Were you surprised by the climax, or was it foreshadowed?

7. How is British society portrayed in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*? Is the portrayal positive, negative, or like the novel's characters, a mixture of confused traits?

Do any characters symbolize British society?

8. How well do we get to know the enemy? Who are the enemy?

9. How is evil depicted in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*? What are its effects on people? What are its sources? Can it be successfully opposed?

10. In *The Secret Pilgrim* (1991; see separate entry), Smiley implies that his style of spying is passe and must make way for a new approach to espionage. Is the spying in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* now out of date? What, if anything, has replaced it? Is there still a need for Smiley's sort of espionage?

11. Is there anything missing in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* that you would like to know?

12. What qualities does *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* have that make it great literature, or what qualities are missing, making it fall short of great literature?

13. Le Carre says that he does not plan out his novels before he begins writing them, that they develop as he writes.

Does *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* show signs of this technique?

14. Is characterization or plot more important to *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*?

Which holds your attention better?

15. For a period in the 1950s and 1960s, the United States withheld much espionage information from the British, insisting that there was a leak in the Circus, yet the British seemed to ignore America's concerns, at least until Philby was exposed, and perhaps thereafter, as well. Does *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* reveal any traits in the Circus or in British society that would explain the British attitude toward a highly placed traitor?

16. What is the significance of Jim Prideaux's teaching career?

Sister Irma M. Kashuba, S.S.J.

Topics for Discussion

What led British intelligence to believe that there was a highly-placed mole within their organization?

What are the problems involved in trying to find the highly-placed mole?

How does Smiley conduct the investigation? Why didn't he just work out of a government office?

What experience has Smiley had with Karla?

Who is Merlin and how does he figure in the investigation?

What is the significance of the term Tinker, Tailor?

How do they get the mole to reveal himself?



Related Titles

The Honorable Schoolboy (1977) is really a sequel to *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. After the discovery of a double agent among the top ranks of the British Intelligence, the Circus needs reorganization and reinvigoration. Once again Smiley's retirement is delayed as he recovers the home forces shattered by the presence of the "mole" in the preceding work. He sets off in pursuit of Karla who masterminded the deception in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

Le Carre chooses as his territory the Far East: Hong Kong, Cambodia, Vietnam, a contemporary topic because of the evanescence of Western power, and the almost perpetual conflict in Thailand and the former Indochina. Smiley, who has finally left his unfaithful wife Ann, directs the operations from London, sending his faithful agent Jerry Westerby to manage the plot.

Jerry appeared briefly in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* as an East Asian expert. He is a failed novelist, called the "schoolboy" in his Tuscan village, a much-married husband, and a guilty father. He is charged with uncovering the use of a half-million dollars of "laundered" Russian money.

The story is long, contains a number of subplots, and its ending falters. One of its positive aspects, in addition to the presence of Smiley, is the dialogue, in which Chinese speak like Chinese, and the British show by the way they speak that they are not all on the same level of society.

Smiley's People (1980) opens in Paris, where a Russian woman is told by a Soviet official that her daughter may come to join her, but the photograph she receives is not of her daughter. Other complications result and Smiley sets off again in pursuit of his archenemy. Here he goes himself to Hamburg, Paris, and Bern, places well known to Le Carre. This is a book with a slow-moving plot and much nostalgia about World War II and the Cold War, when people knew who their enemies were. Michael Wood, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, calls Smiley's boys "beleaguered outdated professionals; the last cowboys of secrecy . . . The spy represents one of the stories we might tell about ourselves, tangled but true."

Although neither book reached the level of sales of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, the trilogy as a whole had sold more than six million copies by 1983. Peter Prescott in *Newsweek* attributed this to the moral concerns expressed: "How does one determine good and evil in an increasingly complex and subversive society? [Le Carre portrays] fallible people caught up in a world of understatement, innuendo, and countless shades of gray, an infinitely human world of intrigue." According to Michael Barber in the *New York Times*, the Smiley books make a point about British society, illustrated when Smiley says in *The Honorable Schoolboy*, "Not to produce was not to trade, and not to trade was to die."

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