

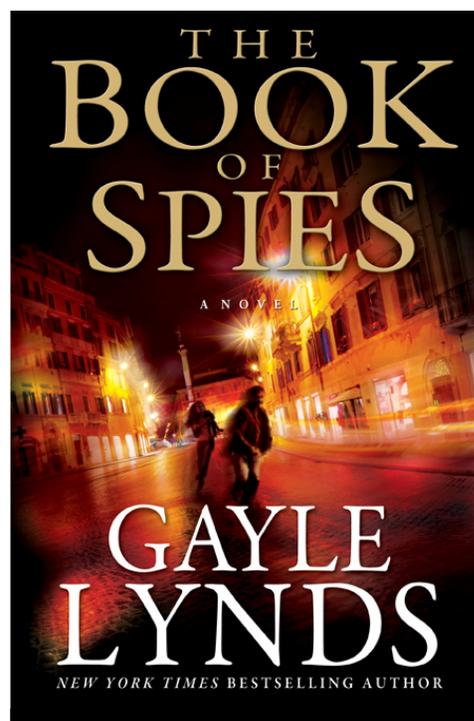


The Book of Spies

by *Gayle Lynds*

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Book of Spies* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *The Book of Spies*.

About the Book

For centuries, emperors, historians, and even the Vatican have tried to locate Ivan the Terrible's magnificent Library of Gold — a long-missing archive containing gold-covered, bejeweled books dating all the way back to the ancient Greeks. Now one of the volumes, *The Book of Spies*, has surfaced, and along with it the highly secret book club that owns the Library of Gold. They form a cabal of the globe's most powerful men — men who will do anything to achieve their aims and protect their interests. When the CIA discovers a connection between the legendary library and a bank account linked to terrorists, they turn to rare books curator Eva Blake for help. Soon an attempt is made on Eva's life. Determined not only to survive but to uncover the truth, Eva turns to the only person she can trust—Judd Ryder, a former intelligence agent with his own agenda and a troubled past. Together, Judd and Eva embark on an international adventure from London to Rome, Istanbul, and Athens. Somehow they must do what no one else has been able to do — find the library and stay alive.

Praise for *Gayle Lynds*

"*The Book of Spies* is hands-down the best book I've read all year. Grippingly paced, poignant, surprising with every turn of the page, this novel stunned me. Gayle Lynds has long been a master of espionage, but with this book, she proves that true masters only get better over time. Destined to become an instant classic in the field. In a word: Wow." --James Rollins on *The Book of Spies*

"One of the best suspense writers in the world." -- James Patterson

"A master of intrigue and adventure" -- Clive Cussler

"Today's finest espionage writer" -- Lee Child

"A master of espionage." -- James Rollins

"One of the premier espionage writers of our time" -- Vince Flynn

"A master of the spy thriller" -- Steve Berry

"A modern classic...Rich with history, breathtaking in plot and pacing, ripe with living, breathing characters we truly care about--or utterly fear--*The Book of Spies* will consume you from page one." -- Jeffrey Deaver

About the Author

Gayle Lynds is the author of five other solo thrillers as well as three co-written with Robert Ludlum. She is the co-founder of the International Thriller Writers (ITW) and lives in Santa Barbara, CA.



Discussion Questions

1. Eva Blake goes to prison for something she neither remembers nor believes she did. Even so, on her lawyer's advice she pleads guilty to get the best possible deal. If you were facing the same situation, what would you do?
2. What aspect of the book did you find most appealing? The characters? The exotic locales? The Library of Gold? The inside view of espionage? The clandestine history? The references to books and reading?
3. All of the details in *The Book of Spies* regarding modern espionage - particularly the CIA, its operations and methods - are meticulously researched. Which of the "spies" in the book did you find most convincing? Intriguing? Sympathetic? Do you think you could, or ever would, be a spy?
4. There is a scene in Italy that takes place in a hidden underground passage to the Cloaca Maxima - an ancient Roman sewer. What do you think it would be like to discover an ancient site in your basement? Where would you most like that basement to be?

5. The book club in this novel is a secret cabal of very rich, very powerful men with enormous hidden impact around the world. Do you believe that such groups exist or could exist? Could such a group remain hidden from the media and major governments?
6. The book opens with a quote - "In the abstruse world of espionage, it's not always easy to know when you are in on a secret." How did you think this quote related to the novel? What do you think it means and do you agree? Has that ever happened to you?
7. In *The Book of Spies*, there is a "black ops" unit called Catapult. What do you think about the CIA's use of seemingly legitimate groups and companies?
8. *The Book of Spies* tells us at least half of the officers and employees working for the CIA are "new hires" - not veterans but people who started after the 9/11 attacks. Why do you think that is and what do you think the effect, if any, has been on our national security?
9. At the center of the novel is a fabulous long-lost library. Are there any lost books - ancient or modern - you would particularly like to read? What do you think the effect to the world would be if such a collection of books was suddenly discovered? If you could find something long lost, what would it be?

A Conversation with Gayle Lynds

Q: *The Book of Spies* is being heralded as your best book yet. But you've done something different with this one. The story has a strong historical element — Ivan the Terrible's real-life lost Library of Gold. Why did you vary from your usual course?

GL: First, the Library of Gold is absolutely fascinating. And second, I love books. So if I could figure out a way to use the library in a modern international spy novel, I'd be able to write not only about governments and espionage, but also about books and readers — people like us. But this didn't happen overnight. I first read about the Library of Gold in a *Los Angeles Times* article more than twenty years ago, in 1989, and was so intrigued that I continued intermittent research for two decades until I finally had a eureka moment — an idea for a novel in which the library would be pivotal. The result is *The Book of Spies*, which asks an apparently simple question: Can the CIA do something no one else has ever done — find Ivan the Terrible's long-lost library of gold-covered books?

Q: What is it about the Library of Gold that made you stay with the idea for twenty years?

GL: Imagine it — a collection of some 800 illuminated manuscripts, all covered in gold and embedded with precious gems. Walls of missing books, the covers facing out, the gold gleaming, the jewels sparkling. Each volume is not only stunningly beautiful, it's a work of art. Plus they're the last known survivors of the Byzantine Empire's fabled imperial library. After the loss of the great library centers in Alexandria, Athens, and Antioch, Byzantium's collection was the last hope of the long-ago Western world and contained works lost to the world forever. To think the Library of Gold might be found now, after nearly five centuries, is irresistible.

Q: What do we know about what happened to the Library of Gold?

GL: After reading his will in the morning and calling for his chess set in the afternoon, Ivan the Terrible died in 1584. His will, which might have listed the library, mysteriously vanished. And so did the library. Some believe he'd hidden it in the maze of tunnels under the Kremlin. Others claim the library never existed. Still it's enthralled generations. "Historians, archaeologists, Peter the Great, and even the Vatican have searched fruitlessly for the missing library for hundreds of years," according to *The Times of London*. The pursuit beneath Moscow continues, with new hunters bringing increasingly modern equipment.

Q: You've done a first — created the world's richest, most powerful, most secret book club in *The Book of Spies*. In some ways the book club reminds me of the mafia in *The Godfather*. Did you intend that?

GL: I love the comparison. Anyone who thinks of book clubs as populated by sedentary, wimpy, irrelevant adults with late-onset acne and terminal timidity is in for a surprise in *The Book of Spies*. Readers rule. Book clubs rock. And the Library of Gold book club has as its members ten men who have shaped themselves after the ancient Greek ideal of the perfect man — athletic, graceful, brainy, philanthropic, but ruthless. There were times when I actually wanted them to win.

Q: Since this begins your first series, did you do anything different in creating your main characters?

GL: Over the years readers have often asked me to bring back the heroes and heroines of earlier novels. But which ones was I to choose? To avoid guilt and the impossible task of selecting the children I loved most, I started fresh in *The Book of Spies* with two terrific characters.

The heroine is Eva Blake. She's not only a rare books curator at the renowned Getty Center in Los Angeles, she has a checkered — and secret — past as a pickpocket. My new hero is Judd Ryder. Retired only a month when the novel opens, he's just served three tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan in military intelligence. He, too, has a secret history, and the last thing he wants to do is jump back into espionage. But their diverse skills — and hidden connections to the Library of Gold — make them perfect for the CIA when it must find the library. I think Judd and Eva are the best, most captivating characters I've ever created.

Q: You're known for your accuracy in portraying the world of espionage. How do you know so much?

GL: Years ago I was an editor at a think tank that did a lot of defense work. As a result I had rare Top Secret security clearance, and for twenty years I couldn't write or talk about anything I learned. Now that I can, it's clear to me as a novelist the most valuable information I came away with was what it was like to live knowing my brain contained intel I couldn't divulge. It impacts every segment of one's life, from the friends one chooses to one's attitudes about oneself. I also met intriguing people in those days, shadowy figures who passed through our department, which

of course required codes to enter. Today I research extensively and have other friends who've retired from the clandestine life, and they're generous with their time and expertise.

Q: The character of Doug Preston is named for *New York Times* best-selling suspense author Doug Preston. How did that happen, and how does he feel about being the major strong-arm in the novel?

GL: Doug is one of my favorite authors, and full of surprises both in his novels and in real life. A year ago or so he bought a hundred dollars worth of drawing tickets at ThrillerFest, in hopes of winning the prize – his name in my next novel. When he won, he was adamant – he wanted to be the villain. How could I deny him? So Doug plays a former CIA officer who's become the chief of security for the Library of Gold. Naturally he loves books – and is very dangerous.

Q: Your novels are known for being truly international, but this one was more so than usual. How did you decide to set *The Book of Spies* in London, Rome, Istanbul, and Athens?

GL: Because of the subject matter of the Library of Gold, I knew early on that several of Europe's greatest ancient cities should be involved. So much of Western history and literature began in Athens, so it was a natural choice. Then the Roman Empire of course became prominent, finally moving its center of power from Rome to Constantinople – today's Istanbul. I love the British Museum, which meant London, where *The Book of Spies* appears for the first time in a special exhibit. To be able to use these four marvelous cities in this adventure story was not only satisfying for me, but exciting.

Q: At the heart of *The Book of Spies* is a CIA black unit called Catapult. Is such a unit unusual in real life?

GL: American secret black units date back to before the CIA was founded in the 1950s. Today they're off the books, their members aren't listed in the Langley directory, and employees are paid from funds that don't appear in Langley's regular accounts. Catapult follows the usual pattern of using a front, in this case an organization called the Council for Peer Education, which to all appearances is completely legitimate. But in reality, Catapult does counteroperations – counterintelligence, counterespionage, countermeasures, and so forth – around the world. It's drawn into the tale by its second in command, Tucker Andersen, a storied spymaster who's discovered the Library of Gold not only exists but its book club may be involved in international crime and terrorist financing.

Q: As you've done in previous novels, you seem to have predicted the future in *The Book of Spies*. In this case, its developments in Afghanistan. How do you do that?

GL: Of course events are still playing out there, and will for years to come. In the book I postulate we've withdrawn our troops, and the hinterlands are still under the command of warlords. As they have done historically, Afghan warlords act as feudal kings with fiefdoms, shifting their loyalties among Taliban, al Qaeda, the Kabul government, and foreign administrations. The scenes in the book occur in rural Khost province on the mountainous

border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, a crossroads of trade and violence. Here the vast majority of residents are Pashtuns, including the Taliban. The loyalties are tangled. The police are largely ineffective. Kabul is far away. But a secret U.S. military base is nearby, with the clandestine complicity of the Kabul government. Time will tell whether I'm correct about the secret bases.

Q: I imagine the Library of Gold would be worth a lot of money today.

GL: A fortune larger than most nation's gross national products. For instance, the Getty Center paid \$5.8 million for *The Northumberland Bestiary* a few years ago. The *Bestiary* is a rare thirteenth-century English Gothic illuminated manuscript. Rare, but not unique, while many books in the Library of Gold would be unique. Figuring a modest \$5 million for each book, and 800 illuminated manuscripts, that's \$4 billion.

Essay

Who has the Library of Gold?

There's nothing quite like the excitement of the hunt, whether it's for love, adventure, or a really good book. For me, writing *The Book of Spies* turned out to be a blue-ribbon winner in all three, although it looked as if it were never going to happen. In this case the passage of time wasn't just weeks or months, it was nearly twenty years.

There's always a beginning, and this one was exciting. One June morning in 1989 my attention was caught by a feature story in *The Los Angeles Times* called "Kremlin Tunnels: The Secret of Moscow's Underworld":

It was a summer evening in 1933 when the two young men found what they were searching for: the entrance to a centuries-old underground tunnel within sight of the red Kremlin walls. As they crept underground toward Moscow's seat of power, lighting their way with a lantern, the men believed they might find Ivan the Terrible's legendary library of gold-covered books. Instead they found five skeletons, a passageway sometimes so narrow that they had to file through singly and, within a few hundred yards of the Kremlin, a rusted steel door they could not open.

I was riveted by the "library of gold-covered books," which I found myself instantly calling the Library of Gold. Imagine what it must have looked like – walls of great illuminated manuscripts bound in gleaming gold and embedded with sparkling gems. The volumes were not only works of art, their contents were priceless, too, dating all the way back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Here were books lost to the world for thousands of years. The *Times* article, written by Masha Hamilton, went on to describe Kremlin officials capturing the young men and ordering them to keep the secret, with the implied threat of death. Then Stalin had a swimming pool built over the area, putting a conclusive end to the search. To this day no one has found the Library of Gold.

Stop thinking about it, I told myself. You write international espionage novels. Contemporary novels. In fact, thrillers. This piece of history has no relationship to the geopolitical forces powering the world, or to today's spies.

The truth was, of course, that I wanted to find the Library of Gold. I wanted to view those magnificent books and discover the lost literary treasures within. And this is exactly how we writers get ourselves into creative trouble. We fall in love with an idea, a character, a scene, a theme. And we won't let go. Can't, really. Even though it makes no darn sense to stay with it.

"You're wasting your time," the voice inside my head announced gloomily.

But then I recalled that Goethe wrote, "Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." The man had a touch of genius himself – he never said when or even if the dream would be realized.

Still, I didn't toss the news story. Instead I added it to the mountain of clippings I keep fermenting in an idea box. Time passed. Children grew up and left home. New books began – and each time I remembered the Library of Gold. Then I lost the clipping for five years, during my father's final illness. But when my granddaughter was born in 2006, I found it again. Through nearly two decades the long-lost library had stayed with me. In fact, I was so intrigued I'd interrupt my other work for flurries of research into it before again resigning myself to the irritating realization I still had no story, and might never.

Then one day my editor asked the magical question: "What's your next book about?"

We writers are isolates, too often stewing in our creative juices. "Well –" And I told him about the Library of Gold.

"I like it. What's the story?" He would ask that.

"I'm working on it." And with that I was suddenly committed. To me, the creative process is one of crawling out onto a limb and sawing it off behind me. The only way to survive is to fly, which meant at long last I had an idea: "The CIA has to find the Library of Gold." Such a blithe, simple statement, but in that is **STORY**. And the CIA made it contemporary. After that came additional questions: Why does the Agency need to find the library? Who owns it, and where is it? At last I was on track, doing the exciting work for which I had longed, imagining my brand-new heroes, Judd Ryder and Eva Blake, and the characters who would support or thwart them as they were caught up in a hunt that would take them from London to Rome, Istanbul to Athens.

My editor liked it. My agent liked it. The result is *The Book of Spies*, dedicated of course to my granddaughter. I hope you enjoy the story.

To have **Gayle Lynds** visit your reading group or call-in for discussion contact: fan_mail@gaylelynds.com.



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