

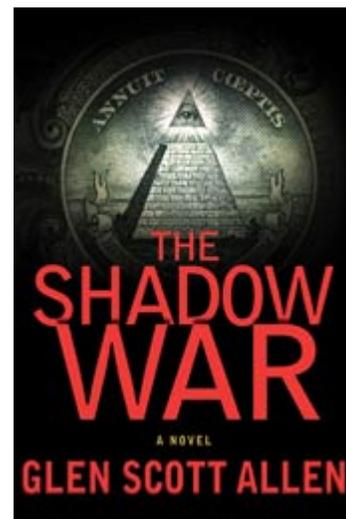


# *The Shadow War*

by *Glen Scott Allen*

ISBN-13: 978-0-312-57655-4

ISBN-10: 0-312-57655-2



## About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Shadow War* 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 Shadow War*.

## About the Book

*In the tradition of The Da Vinci Code, a brilliant new talent delivers a sweeping thriller that turns the entire history of America upside down.*

Colonial historian Benjamin Wainwright is summoned to a secretive think tank in western Massachusetts by an old school friend who researches war-game theory. Upon his arrival, Wainwright discovers that his friend is dead and suspected of having leaked information. When the security analyst hired to investigate the case is targeted for assassination, Benjamin wonders: Was his friend's death an accident—or murder?

A series of codes, forged documents, and secret family histories all point to the existence of a centuries-old conspiracy. Benjamin teams up with a beautiful Russian cultural attaché named Natalya Orlova, whose own family has a dark history with the KGB, to unravel the truth. The two set off on a dangerous mission that stretches from Washington, DC, to the French Riviera, to deep within the Siberian wilderness. Together, they discover the sinister forces that have pulled the strings of power in America—perhaps all the way back to its very founding. What our characters learn will make us question everything we thought we knew about American history, from the Revolution to the Cold War, and what lies in store for the fate of the nation.

With a gripping pace and enigmatic plot that drives the reader from one page to the next, *The Shadow War* is a highly intelligent thriller that asks: Who really runs the country, who controls our enemies, and to what lengths will they go to conceal their hidden agendas?

## Praise for *The Shadow War*

"If you enjoyed THE DA VINCI CODE or THE LOST CONSTITUTION, then you will not be able to put this one down." —Bookreporter.com

"[An] intriguing thriller that posits an audacious and original conspiracy theory.... Allen keeps the action and the ideas flowing with commendable speed." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Looking for a fresh, fast thriller that sweeps from a mysterious seventeenth century opening to a thrilling twenty-first century finale? Yearning for a thoughtful novel about how we got to where we are at this moment in American history? Want both in one place? Well, your search is over, because Glen Scott Allen has delivered *The Shadow War*. Buy it, go home, and prepare yourself to stay up all night, because you won't want to stop reading once you start." —William Martin, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Lost Constitution* and *City of Dreams*

"*The Shadow War* is an intelligent, complex mystery, steeped in history and secrets." —Jill Gregory, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author, co-author of the internationally best-selling thriller, *The Book of Names*

"Concealed within cryptic ciphers, a conspiracy spanning generations entangles two countries a world apart in an ironic partnership. From America's colonial times through the Cold War and beyond, lives were extinguished to protect the secret. History buffs and code crackers alike will find *The Shadow War* a complex thriller that turns conventional history on its head." —Karen Tintori, co-author of the internationally best-selling thriller, *The Book of Names*

## About the Author

GLEN SCOTT ALLEN has been a writer in residence at Reed College and taught at the University of Utah and Towson University. He has published more than a dozen short stories, and more than a hundred essays, reviews, and presentations on science, literature, popular culture, cryptography, and terrorism. Visit Glen online at <http://glenscottallen.com>.



## Discussion Questions

1. The Newburgh Conspiracy of 1783 – the only documented attempt at a military coup against the U.S. government - was an actual historical event. Who was involved? What were they trying to accomplish?
2. What were the beliefs of the Antinomians, a movement among the early Puritans? What happened to their leaders, including Anne Hutchinson?
3. What was the Prayer Town Movement in Colonial America? Why was there resistance to the idea?
4. During the Cold War, did both the Soviets and Americans need "perfect" enemies to remain stable? What was the historian Gabriel Kolko's opinion?
5. Do privately funded research foundations – think tanks – have too much influence on American politics?
6. Samuel Wolfe says, "When you want to know an institutions weaknesses, look at its strengths." Is he right? Can our greatest strengths hide our greatest weaknesses?
7. Natalya Orlova thinks Americans are naïve about how the world works. Do you agree with her?
8. Benjamin Wainwright thinks the American Heritage Foundation conspiracy might have been around a lot longer than just the Cold War. Is there evidence in the book that he's right?
9. Are there current examples of political forces in America stoking the public's fear of enemies to gain and retain power?
10. What do you think is implied by the ending of the book?

## A Conversation with Glen Scott Allen

### **How and why did you first start working on your book?**

Though it may sound strange, the inspiration for *The Shadow War* didn't come from books like *The Da Vinci Code* or Tom Clancy's spy novels. Rather, it came from Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, which is essentially a "locked room" murder mystery where the locked room is a 14<sup>th</sup> century monastery. Instead of a monastery, I chose a secluded think tank, as I know a lot more about academic settings than religious ones. I also wanted the plot to have political relevance, and to present the reader with more complications and layers than is sometimes the case in this genre. I believe there's a market for well written thriller/suspense novels – and I hope *The Shadow War* is one of them.

**Your other writing is non-fiction. Why would an academic want to write a suspense novel?**

I always thought writing such a book would be like creating an enormous puzzle, something challenging but in a different manner than writing scholarly works; something outside my usual sandbox. I'd also taught writing workshops and written "mainstream" fiction for years, and I wanted to strike out on a different kind of creative journey.

**The thriller genre presents a very crowded market for the for a first-time novelist. What features distinguish your book from others on the subject?**

While Dan Brown originally claimed in *The Da Vinci Code* that his plot was based on historical fact, most of it has by now been debunked as hoax or pure fiction. By contrast, I wanted to base *The Shadow War* on *real* historical events – such as the Newburgh Conspiracy – and then extrapolate those real events into imagined sources and consequences. Of course it's still fiction - but there's a lot more reality to it than most readers will realize, unless they do their own digging. I've provided a few links on the book's web site to get the curious reader started with their own research.

**Did you have any interesting experiences when you were researching your book?**

Some of the research for the book came from my travel in Russia. While I can't talk about where and how I obtained some of the information, I can say that I had a lot of interesting encounters there. For instance, I was almost arrested by an Intourist agent in Dubna when I traveled there without official permission; but when he discovered that I was carrying a copy of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, he hugged me and offered me vodka instead. I quickly discovered that, almost anywhere in Russia, a "bonus" for an official's trouble would often get them to unlock files, find "lost" documents, and confirm officially-denied stories.

**Is there anything unusual about how you go about writing?**

I always write to music, but the music can be anything from opera to classic rock to movie soundtracks; depends on what mood I need for the scene I'm writing. I usually have an unlit pipe or a pen clenched in my teeth (I recently quit smoking). And, when I need to work out the "choreography" of a scene, I'll often get up and walk around as though it's being acted out on stage (a trick I learned from a playwriting course back in grad school). I do my first drafts without worrying about spelling, grammar, or punctuation; all that's important is getting the words on the page. After that, I edit, edit, edit.

**What kind of experience has writing and publishing your book been for you?**

It's been a tremendous amount of work – but once the research was done, I essentially wrote the book through one white-hot concentrated three month marathon. After that, I canvassed about twenty five agents with a synopsis. I expected to get tepid responses from one or two – that's what you usually get with mainstream fiction – but instead I got enthusiastic responses from fifteen asking to see more material. Once I had an agent – as far as I'm concerned, the best in the field (Ellen Levine of Trident Media Group) – we had to find a publisher, which can be difficult for someone shopping not only their first novel, but their first foray into a very competitive genre. I'm happy to say we found a terrific editor (Rob Kirkpatrick) at a great house (Thomas Dunne), and that I'm very pleased with the final product.

## Essay

There were three forces that converged to produce *The Shadow War*. First, I'd always wanted to write a murder mystery set in a "think tank," something along the lines of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, but I never had what Alfred Hitchcock called the "MacGuffin"; that is, the central mystery of the plot. Second, for reasons I can't get into here, I came into information about the Soviet missile program during the Cold War and some very curious zigs and zags in its history; zigs and zags that, curiously, matched up with inexplicable decisions in American policy. And third, I've always been a student of our country's early religious and political history – the Puritans and pragmatists I call them - and I knew about some of the less publicized episodes in the beginning of our Nation; things that aren't exactly fore grounded in the typical history text.

So, while *The Shadow War* is a work of fiction, much of the plot is based on historically accurate events. For instance, the Newburgh Conspiracy of 1783 was an actual plot by politicians and officers in the Continental Army aimed at preventing the very sort of democratic government we fought the Revolutionary War to establish. The founding of the country was a much messier and more complicated affair than most people realize, and I wanted to use those complications as a backdrop for the novel's plot. And the information about Soviet underground bases and nuclear war strategy, and their reaction to events in 1963 and 1968, comes from very reliable sources.

I began to see ways to connect these very different interests; I even began to suspect they were connected even without my help. I should say up front that I am not a fanatic "conspiracist." I'm a die-hard skeptic and rationalist, and I don't think 99% of the supposed conspiracies out there are in fact conspiracies at all, largely because most people just can't keep a secret. But I am a believer that human nature doesn't change that much from one century to the next, or one arena to the next; look at the bigger picture and, as Jeremy Fletcher says in the book, the patterns begin to emerge. I also wanted to write a book that not only was entertaining to read, but that might also make readers think about these historical events, and maybe even go out and do some of their own research; to get involved and make their own decisions.

Besides using my research in the book, I also used people and places I've encountered in my travels: Washington DC is near my home in Maryland, I've vacationed and traveled in Southern France and Russia ... and I lived for ten years in the exotic Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I hope the details I picked up give the book a firm foundation.

As to my biography – I grew up in an even more exotic locale: Utah. I lived there until I was 26, when I moved to Boston. Where I attended the writing program at Boston University, lived in Cambridge, and fell in love with the history, culture, and landscape of New England. During that time I lived for a short while in The Netherlands and France. In 1986 I found myself back in Salt Lake City to obtain a PhD in English. My first university teaching gig was Reed College (or as they called it during the Red Scare of the 50s, Red Reed), then Towson University. But during all that time, while I was publishing scholarly essays and short stories and academic books, an unscratched itch was to write a suspense novel. Finally, with *The Shadow War*, I've done that; the first in what I hope will be a trilogy about "the secret history of America."



Contact us at [readinggroup@macmillanusa.com](mailto:readinggroup@macmillanusa.com). Don't forget to check out our monthly newsletter! [www.readinggroupgold.com](http://www.readinggroupgold.com)