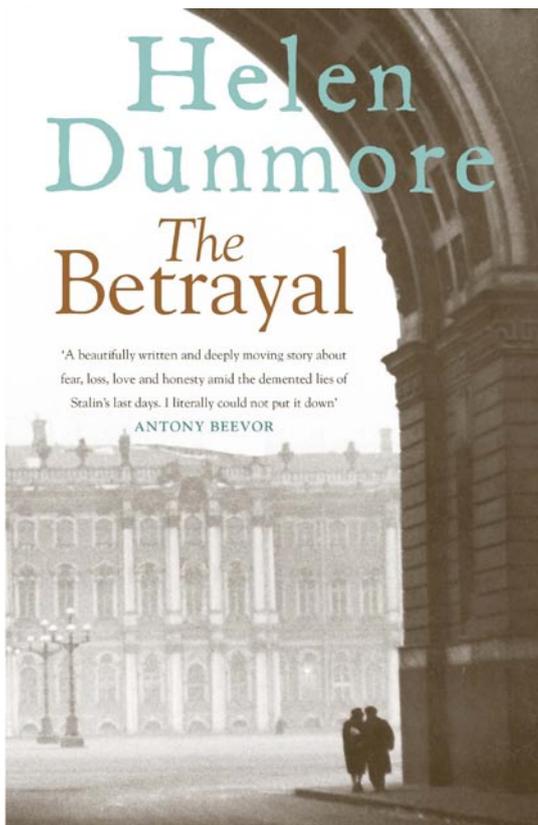




## Reader's Guide



### A selection of other books by Helen Dunmore

*The Siege* (2001)  
*Mourning Ruby* (2003)  
*Ingo* (2006)  
*House of Orphans* (2006)  
*The Tide Knot* (2007)  
*Glad of These Times* (2007)  
*The Deep* (2008)  
*Counting the Stars* (2008)  
*The Crossing of Ingo* (2009)

# The Betrayal Helen Dunmore

Penguin  
Price £18.99

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

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## About the author

Helen Dunmore has published eleven novels with Penguin: *Zennor in Darkness*, which won the McKitterick Prize; *Burning Bright*; *A Spell of Winter*, which won the Orange Prize; *Talking to the Dead*; *Your Blue-Eyed Boy*; *With Your Crooked Heart*; *The Siege*, which was shortlisted for the 2001 Whitbread Novel of the Year Award and for the Orange Prize for Fiction 2002; *Mourning Ruby*, *House of Orphans*, *Counting the Stars* and *The Betrayal*. She is also a poet, children's novelist and short-story writer.

## The Betrayal

Leningrad in 1952: a city recovering from war, where Andrei, a young hospital doctor and Anna, a nursery school teacher, are forging a life together. Summers at the dacha, preparations for the hospital ball, work and the care of sixteen year old Kolya fill their minds. They try hard to avoid coming to the attention of the authorities, but even so their private happiness is precarious. Stalin is still in power, and the Ministry for State Security has new targets in its sights. When Andrei has to treat the seriously ill child of a senior secret police officer, Volkov, he finds himself and his family caught in an impossible game of life and death - for in a land ruled by whispers and watchfulness, betrayal can come from those closest to you.

## Discussion points

*The Betrayal* dramatises an almost-intolerable tension between private life and the demands of a totalitarian state. What do you think of the way the atmosphere of suspicion and terror is created in the novel?

Like Stalin, Volkov is accustomed to power over life and death. In *The Betrayal*, Volkov is confronted with a situation which he cannot control. What is your view of Volkov, and the relationship between him and Andrei?

Parenthood is an important theme in *The Betrayal*. Stalin plays the role of father of the people, Anna and Andrei long for a child, while a father and his sick child set the drama of the novel in motion. How do you respond to the ways in which the novel handles parenthood?

Helen Dunmore is also a successful poet. In a recent *Guardian* interview she said "working as a poet has definitely helped me with the pacing in my novels. I'm very much one for the grip, the pull-through, that narrative energy and propulsion, and I think poetry teaches you about that." When reflecting on the *The Betrayal* can you identify influences from Helen Dunmore's poetry?

Do you agree that 'the conclusion is carefully inconclusive'?

## Themed reading

Pat Barker *Regeneration Trilogy*  
Anthony Beevor *Stalingrad*  
Alexander Solzhenitsyn *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

## Useful links

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