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With My Little Eye

By Sandra Hogan

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Reviewed by Elizabeth Morgan,
Janison Assessments

Sandra Hogan's *With My Little Eye* offers a unique glimpse into the lives of a family entangled in Cold War espionage. This non-fiction account is set in 1950s Australia, when the fear of communism was at its peak and national security agencies like ASIO were on high alert for Soviet infiltration. Hogan blends history and personal narrative to offer a unique perspective on the Cold War era in Australia.

The narrative follows the Doherty family, whose parents were recruited to work for the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). The children's experiences, told from the perspective of eldest daughter Sue-Ellen, recounts the incredible true story of a family of spies in the suburbs.

The book is a fascinating read, offering a personal narrative that complements broader geopolitical discussions. Hogan's storytelling presents the Doherty family's experiences in a manner that is accessible and engaging.

The narrative does not merely recount events; it delves into the psychological impact of living a double life on the children, who were trained to memorise car number plates, surveil streets, and infiltrate organisations while maintaining the façade of normality.

Hogan's narrative is enriched by her ability to weave in moments of humour and absurdity. For instance, she recounts the family's interactions with the famous Soviet defectors Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov during a beach holiday. Furthermore, Hogan writes that during the 1950s and 1960s, Dudley Doherty was a personal friend of Sydney's organised crime boss Abe Safron, and each year for a few days he helped Abe do his stocktake. 'It was hard work, and he always came back exhausted.'

The historical context is well researched, with Hogan drawing on a wealth of primary sources to reconstruct the era's atmosphere. The inclusion of real-life figures adds authenticity to the narrative, and provides an anchor to the historical events that shaped the period.

Hogan's work is not only a recount of historical events but also an exploration of memory, secrecy, and the long-term effects of espionage on family dynamics. For History teachers, *With My Little Eye* is a rich text that offers multiple angles for discussion, from the ethics of involving children in intelligence work to the broader societal implications of Cold War policies. It's a poignant reminder of the human stories behind historical events, and could be a powerful tool in making history relatable and thought-provoking for students.