

Word Count: 497

Though *The Book of Daniel* is E.L. Doctorow's historical analysis of the events surrounding the execution of the Rosenberg couple during the Cold War I felt that restricting my academic research to that event would lose some of the larger analysis Doctorow interlaced about the Cold War. So I dug up an article that summarized the impact personality played on the end of the war. *The Impact of Personality on the End of the Cold War: A Counterfactual Analysis* by Fred I. Greenstein (International Society of Political Psychology, 1998) gives some basic analysis of the issues surrounding the Cold War. At the heart of the author's argument he states that because our planet's biggest powers "were poised in a thermonuclear standoff" only fear of the destructive power countries had kept the peace (Greenstein 1). The article focuses on the role politics played in the end of the war, and ultimately if individuals can affect issues like this or not. In essence the article seems to tap the core of what Daniel is getting at when he asks "Why do the facts of Russian national torment make Americans feel smug?" (Doctorow 16).

Daniel's reading of the Cold War is understandably associated with the tragedy of his parents' executions. He sees a distinction between murder that is politically necessary and factional terrorism throughout history, his parents' executions being that of politically necessary (Doctorow 15). He notes that historically many war trials were flawed (Doctorow 52), and this included those of his parents (Doctorow 226). Whenever someone defeats an enemy (maybe the US against Daniel's parents?) that enemy must be entirely destroyed (Doctorow 235). It is from this need that the US had to fry his parents. Interestingly he sees that though the Russians were portrayed as aggressive and untrustworthy the presidential administration never really considered them a military threat (Doctorow 237). Why, then, did the US get so worked up about "commies", and ultimately destroy Daniel's parents?

The last component of what we need to do here is make the connections between Daniel's understanding of the history and this novel Doctorow wrote from his perspective. The entire story Daniel tells is a fictionalization of a specific execution related to the alleged telling of secrets to the Soviets. Therefore we can assume elements of Daniel's story can be puzzled together to fit the historical event almost perfectly. As Daniel describes his experiences as just a kid watching his parents degraded and executed by the government we see an emotional fictionalization of the real events. Likewise we see that the dynamics of Daniel's relationships with both people he knew and the movement to free his parents, matches the historical events. The novel is written from Daniel's perspective so that we learn the interconnectedness of these dynamics and events in "real-time" so to speak just as Daniel is finding them out. Aligning this novel with Daniel writing his dissertation enables us to learn some direct contextual history as we read the novel.