# Invented Lives by Andrea Goldsmith

## Synopsis

It is the mid-1980s. In Australia, stay-at-home wives jostle with want-it-all feminists, while AIDS threatens the sexual freedom of everyone. On the other side of the world, the Soviet bloc is in turmoil.

Mikhail Gorbachev has been in power for a year when twenty-four-year-old book illustrator Galina Kogan leaves Leningrad — forbidden ever to return. As a Jew, she’s inherited several generations worth of Russia’s chronic anti-Semitism. As a Soviet citizen, she is unprepared for Australia and its easy-going ways.

Once settled in Melbourne, Galina is befriended by Sylvie and Leonard Morrow, and their adult son, Andrew. The Morrow marriage of thirty years balances on secrets. Leonard is a man with conflicted desires and passions, while Sylvie chafes against the confines of domestic life. Their son, Andrew, a successful mosaicist, is a deeply shy man. He is content with his life and work — until he finds himself increasingly drawn to Galina.

While Galina grapples with the tumultuous demands that come with being an immigrant in Australia, her presence disrupts the lives of each of the Morrows. No one is left unchanged.

## Discussion questions

1. Was Galina justified in her decision to leave the Soviet Union?
2. What are the main conflicts and challenges Galina experiences in her attempt to find home in Australia?
3. What does Galina’s experience as a Soviet émigré to Australia reveal about the nature of home?
4. All the characters in Invented Lives experience a sense of exile. Galina knows what it is to be exiled from country. What of Andrew, Sylvie, and Leonard? What is their experience of exile?
5. Fear and desire. How do these emotions drive the actions of the characters? And how do they affect their decisions?
6. What purpose do letters serve in Sylvie’s life?
7. Letters are a rarity in our contemporary digital age. What, if anything, has been lost? What might be the contemporary version of Sylvie’s final letter to Mark?
8. Both Sylvie and Leonard are unfaithful. How do their situations compare? They’ve been married for 30 years; do they have another 30 years?
9. When Mikhail turns up, Galina, usually so strong and resilient, is suddenly stripped of determination and reason. How do you explain this reaction?
10. Do Andrew and Galina have a future together?

*Discussion questions from https://scribepublications.com.au/books-authors/books/invented-lives-9781925713589*