

# The Top 125 Spy Thriller

Authors Ranked by  
Tim Shipman for Spybrary



Many of you will know Tim Shipman as the Chief Political Commentator at the Sunday Times or maybe you know him as the author of All Out War?

But did you know that Tim is also a huge fan of spy books and boasts his own very impressive Spybrary? In this exclusive Spybrary feature Tim reveals his top 125 spy authors, ranks them and he shares his recommendations on which of the authors book to start with and which is his favourite!

This briefing is the skinny version, designed for those agents out in the field (aka) book shops, library sales, garage sales, friend's homes, libraries etc who quickly want to consult the list. Tim wrote 50,000+ words on his list which you can access [here](#). We also hosted a live panel discussing his picks which you can watch or listen to [here](#).

I decided not to add links to Amazon for each of these books. I figured that you know how to use Google and our preference is, where possible to support our local bookshops, though some of these steers are out of print so for those we recommend Ebay, Abebooks and used/second-hand bookstores. Happy Hunting and don't forget to join our [Spybrary Online Community](#) to share photos of your finds and to discuss Tim's picks with other spy book fans.

Shane Whaley, Station V, Spybrary.com

## 1. John le Carré

**Start with:** The Spy Who Came in From the Cold

**Tim's pick:** Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

## 2. Len Deighton

**Start with:** Berlin Game for Bernard Samson or Funeral in Berlin for the unnamed spy (DON'T start with The Ipcress File)

**Tim's pick:** Berlin Game, SSGB

## 3. Joseph Kanon

**Start with:** Los Alamos

**Tim's pick:** Defectors

## 4. Eric Ambler

**Start with:** The Mask of Dimitrios

**Tim's pick:** Epitaph For A Spy.

## 5. Ian Fleming

**Start with:** Casino Royale

**Tim's pick:** Moonraker

## 6. Graham Greene

**Start with:** Our Man in Havana

**Tim's pick:** The Human Factor

## 7. Adam Hall

**Start with:** The 9th Directive (DON'T start with The Berlin Memorandum)

**Tim's pick:** The Warsaw Document

## 8. Mick Herron

**Start with:** Slow Horses

**Tim's pick:** Real Tigers

## 9. David Ignatius

**Start with:** Agents of Innocence

**Tim's pick:** A Firing Offense

## 10. Peter O'Donnell

**Start with:** Modesty Blaise

**Tim's pick:** A Taste for Death

## 11. Charles McCarry

**Start with:** The Tears of Autumn

**Tim's pick:** The Secret Lovers

## 12. Brian Freemantle

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Charlie Muffin

## 13. Joseph Hone

**Start with:** The Private Sector

**Tim's pick:** The Sixth Directorate

#### **14. Robert Littell**

**Start with:** The Defection of AJ Lewinter or The Company

**Tim's pick:** The Amateur

#### **15. Anthony Price**

**Start with:** The Labyrinth Makers

**Tim's pick:** Other Paths to Glory

#### **16. Alan Furst**

**Start with:** Night Soldiers

**Tim's pick:** Dark Star

#### **17. Francis Clifford**

**Start with:** The Grosvenor Square Goodbye

**Tim's pick:** The Naked Runner

#### **18. Charles Cumming**

**Start with:** The Trinity Six

**Tim's pick:** Typhoon

#### **19. John Gardner**

**Start with:** The Nostradamus Traitor.

**Tim's pick:** The Garden of Weapons

#### **20. Sarah Gainham**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Stone Roses

#### **21. Gerald Seymour**

**Start with:** Harry's Game

**Tim's pick:** The Waiting Time (US title is Dead Ground.)

#### **22. Ted Allbeury**

**Start with:** The 20th Day of January

**Tim's pick:** The Other Side of Silence

#### **23. Paul Vidich**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Mercenary

#### **24. Ross Thomas**

**Start with:** The Cold War Swap (UK title – A Spy In the Vodka.)

**Tim's pick:** Chinaman's Chance

#### **25. Henry Porter**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** A Spy's Life

#### **26. Simon Conway**

**Start with:** A Loyal Spy

**Tim's pick:** The Stranger

#### **27. Alan Williams**

**Start with:** Barbouze

**Tim's Pick:** The Tale of the Lazy Dog

#### **28. John Lawton**

**Start with:** Black Out

**Tim's Pick:** Riptide

#### **29. Greg Rucka**

**Start With:** Queen & Country graphic novels

**Tim's Pick:** Private Wars

#### **30. Olen Steinhauer**

**Start with:** The Tourist

**Tim's pick:** The Nearest Exit

#### **31. Adam Brookes**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Night Heron

#### **32. Jason Matthews**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Red Sparrow



**33. John Buchan**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Thirty Nine Steps

**34. Alistair MacLean**

**Start with:** The Last Frontier

**Tim's pick:** Ice Station Zebra

**35. Clive Egleton**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Seven Days To A Killing

**36. Michael Gilbert**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Game Without Rules

**37. Frederick Forsyth**

**Start with:** Day of the Jackal

**Tim's pick:** The Fourth Protocol

**38. William Garner**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Think Big, Think Dirty.

**39. Craig Thomas**

**Start with:** Firefox

**Tim's pick:** The Bears Tears

**40. Dan Fesperman**

**Start with:** The Warlord's Son

**Tim's pick:** The Double Game

**41. Gavin Lyall**

**Start with:** The Secret Servant

**Tim's Pick:** The Crocus List

**42. Donald Hamilton**

**Start with:** Death of a Citizen

**Tim's pick:** The Ambushers

**43. Robert Harris**

**Start with:** An Officer and a Spy

**Tim's pick:** Fatherland

**44. Don Winslow**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Power of the Dog

**45. Helen MacInnes**

**Start with:** Assignment in Brittany

**Tim's pick:** Agent in Place

**46. Edward Wilson**

**Start with:** The Envoy

**Tim's pick:** The Midnight Swimmer

**47. Daniel Silva**

**Start with:** The Kill Artist

**Tim's pick:** The Messenger

**48. Bill Granger**

**Start with:** The November Man

**Tim's pick:** Henry McGee is Not Dead

**49. Jeremy Duns**

**Start with:** Free Agent

**Tim's pick:** The Moscow Option

**50. James Mitchell aka James Munro**

**Start with:** A Magnum for Schneider

**Tim's pick:** Russian Roulette

**51. Desmond Bagley**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Running Blind

**52. Philip Kerr**

**Start with:** March Violets

**Tim's pick:** A Quiet Flame

**53. Brian Garfield**

**Start with:** Hopscotch

**Tim's pick:** Checkpoint Charlie

**54. Ken Follett**

**Start with:** Storm Island aka The Eye of the Needle

**Tim's pick:** Triple



**55. John Bingham**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Double Agent

**56. Lionel Davidson**

**Start with:** Night of Wenceslas

**Tim's pick:** Kolymsky Heights

**57. Michael Hartland**

**Start with:** Down Among the Dead Men

**Tim's pick:** Seven Steps to Treason

**58. Tom Clancy**

**Start with:** The Hunt for Red October

**Tim's pick:** Cardinal of the Kremlin

**59. David Quammen**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Soul of Victor Tronko

**60. Anthony Hyde**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Red Fox

**61. William Haggard**

**Start with:** The Powder Train

**Tim's pick:** The Power House

**62. Warren Tute**

**Start with:** A Matter of Diplomacy

**Tim's pick:** The Tarnham Connection

**63. David Brierley**

**Start with:** Cold War

**Tim's pick:** Big Bear Little Bear

**64. Andrew York**


**Start with:** The Eliminator

**Tim's pick:** The Deviator

**65. Owen John**

**Start with:** 30 Days Hath September

**Tim's pick:** The Shadow in the Sea



**66. Robert Ludlum**

**Start with:** The Bourne Identity

**Tim's pick:** The Bourne Supremacy

**67. Yulian Semyonov**

**Start with:** Seventeen Moments of Spring

**Tim's pick:** TASS is Authorized to Announce

**68. David McCloskey**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Damascus Station

**69. Nelson De Mille**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Charm School

**70. John R Maxim**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Bannerman Solution.

**71. Kenneth Benton**

**Start with:** Sole Agent

**Tim's pick:** A Spy In Chancery

**72. Evelyn Anthony**

**Start with:** The Defector aka The Betrayal

**Tim's pick:** The Avenue of the Dead

**73. Victor Canning**

**Start with:** Firecrest

**Tim's pick:** The Rainbird Pattern

**74. Martin Cruz Smith**

**Start with:** Gorky Park

**Tim's pick:** Polar Star

**75. William Boyd**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Restless

**76. Anthony Horowitz**

**Start with:** Trigger Mortis

**Tim's pick:** With a Mind to Kill

**77. Ian McEwan**

**Start with:** The Innocent

**Tim's pick:** Sweet Tooth

**78. James Grady**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Six Days of the Condor

**79. Desmond Cory**

**Start with:** Undertow

**Tim's pick:** Feramontov

**80. Robert Wilson**

**Start with:** A Small Death in Lisbon

**Tim's pick:** The Company of Strangers

**81. Kingsley Amis**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Colonel Sun

**82. Owen Matthews**

**Start with:** Black Sun

**Tim's pick:** Red Traitor

**83. Adam Diment**

**Start with:** The Dolly Dolly Spy

**Tim's pick:** The Great Spy Race

**84. Andrew Williams**

**Start with/Tim's pick:** Witchfinder



## 85. Jack Higgins

**Start with:** The Eagle Has Landed

**Tim's pick:** Night of the Fox

## 86. Francis Beeding

**Start with/Tim's pick:** One Sane Man

## 87. Duncan Kyle

**Start with:** A Cage of Ice

**Tim's pick:** A Raft of Swords

## 88. John Trenhaile

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Man Called Kyril

## 89. David Downing

**Start with:** Zoo Station

**Tim's pick:** Potsdam Station

## 90. William F Buckley Jr.

**Start With:** Saving the Queen

**Tim's pick:** Who's on first

## 91. Holly Watt

**Start with/Tim's pick:** To The Lions

## 92. Erskine Childers

**Start with/Tim's pick:** The Riddle of the Sands

## 93. Geoffrey Household

**Start with:** Rogue Male

**Tim's pick:** Hostage London

## 94. Geoffrey Osborne

**Start with:** The Power Bug

**Tim's pick:** Traitor's Gait

## 95. Stephen Coulter aka James Mayo

**Start with:** Hammerhead (Mayo)

**Tim's pick:** The Soyuz Affair (Coulter)

## 96. Tom Bradby

**Start with:** Secret Service

**Tim's pick:** Yesterday's Spy

## 97. Jimmy Sangster

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** Private I (aka The Spy Killer)

## 98. Alex Berenson

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Faithful Spy

## 99. Matthew Richardson

**Start with:** My Name is Nobody

**Tim's Pick:** The Insider

## 100. Trevanian

**Start with:** The Eiger Sanction

**Tim's pick:** Shibumi

## 101. Edward S Aarons

**Start with:** Assignment Suicide

**Tim's pick:** Assignment Tokyo

## 102. James Wolff

**Start with:** Beside The Syrian Sea

**Tim's pick:** How to Betray Your Country

## 103. Nicholas Luard

**Start with:** The Robespierre Serial

**Tim's pick:** The Dirty Area AKA A Shadow Spy

## 104. Manda Scott

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** A Treachery of Spies

## 105. Dov Alfon

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** A Long Night in Paris

## 106. David Wolstencroft

**Start with:** Good News, Bad News

**Tim's pick:** Contact Zero



### **107. Bryan Forbes**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Endless Game

### **108. Simon Mawer**

**Start with:** The Girl Who Fell From the Sky

**Tim's pick:** Tightrope

### **109. Vladimir Volkoff**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Turn Around

### **110. E Phillips Oppenheim**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Great Impersonation

### **111. Derek Lambert**

**Start with:** The Yermakov Transfer

**Tim's pick:** I, Said The Spy

### **112. James Naughtie**

**Start With:** The Madness of July

**Tim's pick:** Prague Spring

### **113. Tim Sebastian**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Spy In Question

### **114. Vince Flynn**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** Transfer of Power

### **115. Colin Forbes**

**Start with:** Double Jeopardy

**Tim's pick:** The Heights of Zervos

### **116. Andrew Garve**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Ascent of D13



### **117. Anthony Trew**

**Start with:** Two Hours to Darkness

**Tim's pick:** The Zhukov Briefing

### **118. Henry S Maxfield**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** Legacy of a Spy

### **119. Terry Hayes**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** I Am Pilgrim

### **120. Palma Harcourt**

**Start with:** Shadows of a Doubt

**Tim's pick:** Dance for Diplomats

### **121. Gayle Lynds**

**Start with:** Masquerade

**Tim's Pick:** The Last Spymaster

### **122. Joseph Finder**

**Start with:** The Moscow Club

**Tim's Pick:** Extraordinary Powers

### **123. Christopher Wood**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** James Bond and The Spy Who Loved Me

### **124. Gerard De Villiers**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Madmen of Benghazi

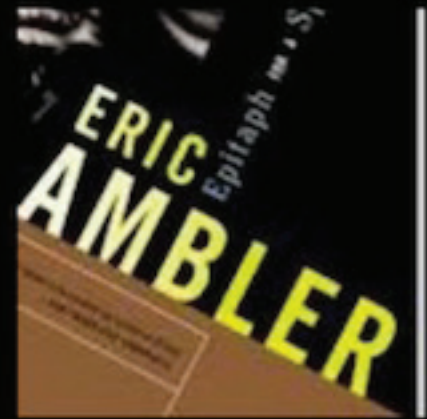
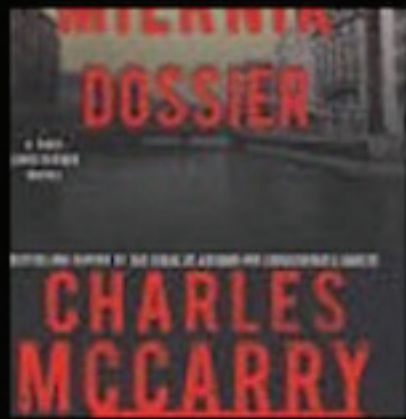
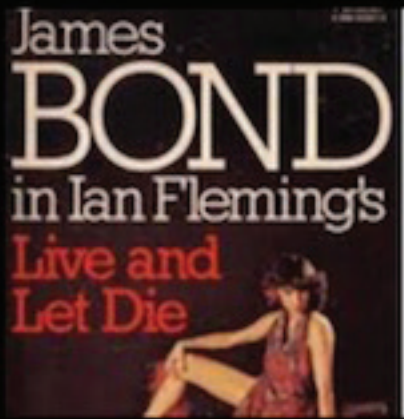
### **125. Francine Matthews**

**Start With:** The Secret Agent

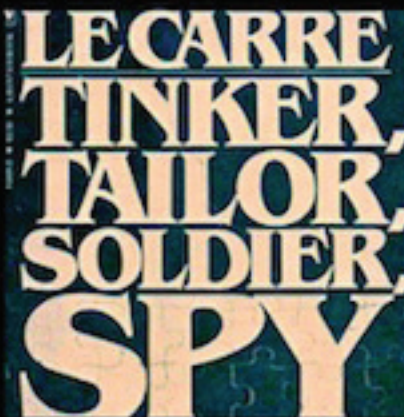
**Tim's pick:** The Alibi Club

### **126. William le Queux**

**Start with/Tim's Pick:** The Invasion of 1910



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