

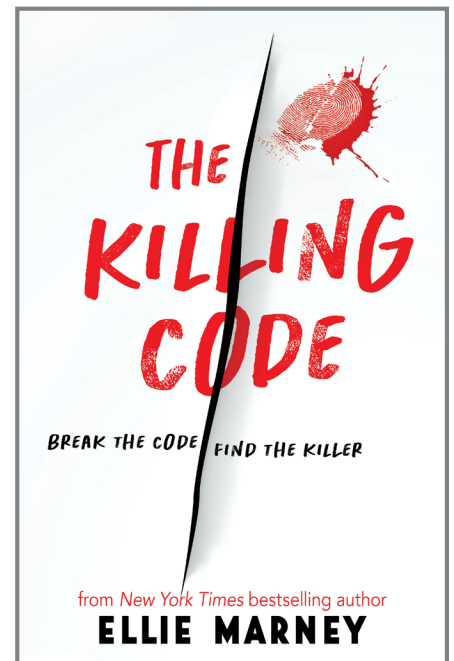
The Killing Code

AUTHOR
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Secondary
(Sexual Content, Violence)



SYNOPSIS

Miss Sutherland ... what would you say if I told you I might be able to offer you a job helping the war effort?'

1943. World War II is raging across Europe and on the Pacific front. Kit Sutherland is hiding a huge secret when she is unexpectedly recruited to work as a young codebreaker at Arlington Hall, a US Signals Intelligence facility.

When Kit's roommate doesn't return home from a dance, it sparks a search that ends in a gruesome discovery. And soon it turns into a horrifying pattern: Government girls are being murdered in Washington, DC.

Kit joins forces with three other girl codebreakers, Dottie, Moya and Violet, and as they work to crack the killer's code, two things become terrifyingly clear: the murderer they're hunting is getting closer every moment...and Kit's own secret could put her in more jeopardy than she ever imagined.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellie Marney is a multi-award-winning, New York Times bestselling author of crime thrillers. Her books are published in ten countries and have been optioned for television. She's spent a lifetime researching in mortuaries, interviewing law enforcement officers, talking to autopsy specialists, and asking former spies how to make explosives from household items, and now she lives quite sedately in south eastern Australia with her family. Ellie invites you to find out more about her and her books at elliemarney.com.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading, read the back-cover blurb and highlight key words giving an insight into the book's genre. Look closely at the front cover to analyse its visual elements, asking questions such as:
 - Do the images on the cover relate to any of the key words?
 - Do the colours used relate to any of the key words?
 - Does the font used in the title and subtitle relate to any of the key words?
 - Does the simplicity of the white background highlight or diminish the effects of all of the above?
- Did the first chapter of *The Killing Code* hook you? What elements did the author use to compel you to keep reading? Analyse your reaction to Chapter One by asking yourself the following questions:
 - Did you find the characters of Katherine and Kathleen interesting?
 - Did you find their relationship intriguing?
 - What did you learn about the society in which the story is set?
 - If the purpose of an opening chapter is to draw the reader into the story and make them want to read on, how

would you rate this chapter and why did you assign that rating?

- Is this story told in first, second or third-person narrative? How and why does the POV change in the course of the chapter?
- Why do you think the author chose this narrative over first or second? How might your reading experience have changed if the story were told in first person from Kit's POV? How might it have changed if it were told entirely in first person from Violet's POV? Why do you think the author, Ellie Marney, decided to show both Kit and Moya's POV's in key scenes?
- Most of the action of *The Killing Code* takes place during March 1943. Other than the narration directly informing the reader about the war on p 1, what details (both minor and major) has the author included to paint a complete picture of that time? How does that time differ from our own in terms of values—gender, sexual, racial?
 - Why do you think the author gave the novel a wartime backdrop? Do you think the story would have been as effective if it had been set in a time of peace?
- 'There are girls everywhere now: girls in the streets, girls in uniform, girls in the newly completed Pentagon building three miles away. Girls are crammed into every available space in the capital, hot-bedding it in billet bunkhouses, lining the counters at drugstores and train stations, sitting three abreast on buses. Newspaper editorials complain about the lipstick brigade, but that's just how it is while the boys are overseas.' p 24. While Kit, Moya, Dottie and Violet are each experiencing a newfound freedom, how does Ellie Marney show that not all of US society is comfortable with the change in gender roles?
- Ellie Marney describes it as providential that a girl's school, Arlington Hall, should go on to become the site where so many Allied women codebreakers worked. What do you think she meant by the term providential?
 - Find out a little more about Arlington Hall and its history before and after the events of the novel.
- Would you describe *The Killing Code* as a mystery or thriller? In your answer define each term and match elements within the novel that fit the definitions. Are the two terms mutually exclusive or could *The Killing Code* be both mystery and thriller?
- Red herrings, false identities, plot twists and cliffhangers are common literary devices in mysteries and thrillers. Find examples of each in *The Killing Code*.
- Violent crime is another factor that is common in mysteries and thrillers. Why do you think readers find this so compelling and why are we drawn to stories where the violent crime has been committed by serial killers?
- Did you find the novel's resolution convincing and satisfying? Was the ending consistent with what you had discovered of the characters up to that point? Was the ending logical? Once you found out the identity of the killer were you reminded of any red flags about him earlier in the novel. Is it better to have had your suspicions about a villain confirmed or to be completely surprised when you find them out?
- Why does Kit find the idea of taking a 'flying boat' to Newfoundland with Moya so funny at the end of the novel? [Hint: re-read Chapter One] How does the reappearance of the metaphor bring closure to the novel?
- The author's dedication is, '...—and to every woman who has ever had to hide her light under a bushel'. What do you think this dedication means in light of Kit, Moya, Dottie and Violet's experiences?
- Find the US cover of *The Killing Code* online and compare it with its Australian counterpart. Do the Australian and US covers suggest different things about the novel? Why do you think book covers are sometimes changed from country to country?
- To delve further into the world of codebreaking, visit the following:
 - The University of Cambridge's Department of Mathematics has produced a simple online guide for beginner codebreakers entitled, *The Secret World of Codes and Codebreaking*.
 - If you want to find out about famous crimes that have been solved through codebreaking then you can't go past visiting the FBI website and searching for the article, *Codebreaking in Law Enforcement: a 400-Year History*.
- Finally, use your newfound codebreaking skills to crack Ellie Marney's codes in the Author Note at the back of the book.