



Inside the Minds of Serial Killers: Why They Kill

Katherine Ramsland

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This book examines a variety of serial killers, from sexual predators to psychotic killers, from murder teams to odd eccentric stalkers, in order to present the distinct psychological dynamics that set serial killers apart from other violent murderers. Among the motives addressed are lust, control, glory, profit, thrill, delusions, rage, the desire for company, the need to please a partner, and even murder as an intellectual exercise. Serial killers live double lives, hiding their violence even from those who live with them, so along with a study of motives are chapters devoted to how close associates have described killers, including parents, siblings, co-workers, lovers, and survivors. There is no profile of a serial killer, and this book establishes that in vivid and frightening detail.

Inside the Minds of Serial Killers: Why They Kill Details

Date : Published August 1st 2006 by Praeger

ISBN : 9780275990992

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Format : Hardcover 199 pages

Genre : Crime, True Crime, Psychology, Nonfiction, Mystery

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Lindsay says

This book has some interesting insights and has categorized serial killers by type--lust, greed, psychosis, etc. I think I enjoyed reading the bibliography most of all. The book as a whole can't decide if it's academic or not.

Hence the skimming.

oleeleo says

Clean, concise writing style. Very comprehensive presentation of well known violent criminal offenders (and not so well known) that offers some explanation as to what leads some down this dark path.

The takeaway from this book (presented in the beginning of the book and reinforced throughout via expert opinion and statistics) is this: not all serial killers are loners live on the fringes of society. The myth that they are easy to spot or fall into a pat category could not be further from the truth. Many were married with children, stalwart citizens and well liked in their communities. Masters of 'compartmentalizing' these people fooled the people closest to them for years, often decades.

Ramsland pointed out that the existing theory that 'serials' were mostly white men, above average intelligence whose violence was borne of a violent or abusive background is simply not true. Studies were done interviewing prisoners from a very limited demographic group years ago that led to that theory ;It is simply outdated and inaccurate.

The book highlighted women, young children, teenagers and couples who all broke from this mold of the 'typical' offender. I will warn you this book is not for the faint heart (some details of the crimes are upsetting). The aberrant mind is fascinating; many people are interested in it as well apparently. Ramsland wrote that many people are simply curious about what went wrong to make these people (I use the term loosely, they're monsters) behave in such deviant ways. I think partially this curiosity is encoded in our genes - we want to know (and modify our behavior accordingly for survival!) what such a person looks like or acts like. We want some 'tells' to help up avoid them. As the author grimly notes this is almost impossible to achieve as "chances are, they'll spot you before you spot them." AW ,SNAP!

It's clear that no one has the answers (yet) on exactly what causes psychopathy in people and what we can to do to prevent or track these people. Chilling thought but a fascinating book.

Larisa I. says

Enlightening from many points of view, this book pesents numerous examples in each chapter which is structured in a fluid and detailed way. Unlike other criminal-psychology books, even he/she who knows as little as nothing of psychology can comprehend it and very little research could be needed on the reader`s behalf.

I recommend reading this book especially if you are a psychology or a criminal-psychology student. Other than that, I found it to be fairly accessible also to a public intended on reading about such subjects for pleasure, curiosity, etc...

Meaghan says

A decently written and researched study, covering all different types of serial killers including some obscure ones. I did notice a few minor errors, but nothing serious. This book would be suitable for the intelligent layman and has a good bibliography.

Nadia says

It was an interesting read. Nothing shockingly new, but it was put together pretty nicely. Most of the stuff I knew from different series and movies related to serial killers theme, but it was nice to see that they actually were pretty well grounded. If you want to know more details you should probably read other more specific books, but this one was pretty good in summoning things up. Why person have urges, why he starts acting on them, why relatives don't suspect anything or why they occasionally participate, what drives them and what is MO :)

IDK, i probably would like to read more about Ted Bundy or BTK or some other organized serial killer. It's creepy how many of them there are. And they need to be really smart to pull that off nowadays with all tech police and FBI have. I guess the smartest are never caught...

Mark Noonan says

This book is not for the squeamish. There is very graphic detail of rape, torture, and murder. However... it is also very informative, and I could not put it down. I look forward to reading more from Katherine Ramsland.

Stacy Green says

Love all Katherine Ramsland's books. She does a great job of telling us about the psychology without overwhelming readers with technical terms. Definitely recommend.
