



Zodiac Unmasked: The Identity of America's Most Elusive Serial Killer Revealed

Robert Graysmith

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Zodiac Unmasked: The Identity of America's Most Elusive Serial Killer Revealed Robert Graysmith
Robert Graysmith reveals what he feels is the true identity of Zodiac - America's most elusive serial killer.

Between December 1968 and October 1969 a hooded serial killer called Zodiac terrorized San Francisco. Claiming responsibility for thirty-seven murders, he manipulated the media with warnings, dares, and bizarre cryptograms that baffled FBI code-breakers. Then as suddenly as the murders began, Zodiac disappeared into the Bay Area fog.

After painstaking investigation and more than thirty years of research, Robert Graysmith finally exposes Zodiac's true identity. With overwhelming evidence he reveals the twisted private life that led to the crimes, and provides startling theories as to why they stopped. America's greatest unsolved mystery has finally been solved.

INCLUDES PHOTOS AND A COMPLETE REPRODUCTION OF ZODIAC'S LETTERS

Zodiac Unmasked: The Identity of America's Most Elusive Serial Killer Revealed Details

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From Reader Review *Zodiac Unmasked: The Identity of America's Most Elusive Serial Killer Revealed* for online ebook

Katherine Addison says

See also *Zodiac*.

This book shares with *Zodiac* the inherently confusing, nebulous, ambiguous nature of its material, but it also has some problems of its own. The worst of which is repetition. Graysmith not only repeats information covered in *Zodiac* (which I totally admit he couldn't avoid), but he repeats information **within** *Zodiac Unmasked*. There was a symposium on *Zodiac* in 1993, and Graysmith not only gives large chunks of that verbatim, but he repeats the quotes, again verbatim, at other points in the text, without even flagging that that's what he's doing. It's annoying and unnecessary, and somewhere along the line a good editor should have dealt with it. *Zodiac Unmasked* is about twice the length of *Zodiac*, and it doesn't need to be.

The experience of reading these books, particularly *Zodiac Unmasked* feels like a matter of form mirroring content: endlessly going over the same ground, looking for things missed or new interpretations or can we get DNA evidence off these thirty-year-old envelopes? Hunting down witnesses who weren't properly interviewed in the 60s, arguing about whether a particular murder or a particular letter was or was not the actual *Zodiac*'s work. (Graysmith loses points with me because he changes his mind about the authenticity of one of the letters and doesn't bother to SAY SO. And it's important because it's the 1978 letter, which he *uses* as part of his argument for Starr/Allen being the *Zodiac*--until suddenly, when the DNA doesn't match, he's like, *Oh that letter. The fake.*

(He also, incidentally, does a lousy job of the transition from calling the prime suspect Robert Hall Starr to using his real name, Arthur Leigh Allen.)

The matter of that 1978 letter, the one that is sometimes real and sometimes fake depending on whether it suits Graysmith's argument or not, is representative of what happens to evidence in the *Zodiac* case. Nobody can agree about any of it. And what's really frustrating--and this is not a frustration with Graysmith, this is a frustration that he does really an excellent job of exposing--is the degree to which the fact that this case is unresolvable is due to bad police work at the beginning. Not the part where they didn't have DNA analysis to help. The part where police didn't follow up with witnesses, didn't come back to see if they could identify the *Zodiac* from a photo line-up (and 20, 30 years later, when other detectives *did* track them down, they were remarkably consistent in identifying Arthur Leigh Allen, which would have been super helpful back in 1968), where the first guy to interview Arthur Leigh Allen decided, snap judgment, on the spot, that Allen wasn't the killer and therefore wrote the interview up in 100 words or less and never bothered to mention what sent him to interview Allen in the first place. And police departments and sheriff's departments not cooperating with each other, not sharing vital information, the Department of Justice stepping on everybody's toes, evidence getting destroyed, getting lost, getting "lost."

I think it's very likely that Arthur Leigh Allen was the *Zodiac* killer. (If he wasn't, my god, that poor man spent the last twenty years of his life being harassed and stalked by professional and amateur detectives alike. If he *was* *Zodiac*, of course, that's not even close to as bad as he deserves.) I have no idea how many of the letters attributed to him he actually wrote (and it puzzles me that in *Zodiac*, Graysmith presents a complicated but entirely plausible method by which *Zodiac* could have disguised his handwriting and stymied every forensic document examiner ever born, and then in *Zodiac Unmasked*, that method just disappears and Graysmith talks about comparing suspect's handwriting to *Zodiac*'s as if he'd never explained

why that was pointless). I don't know how many of the possible Zodiac murders he committed. Graysmith got me so confused with the various detectives arguing for and against various murders (all of a sudden we're doubting Faraday and Jensen were killed by Zodiac? what? where did that come from?) that I'm not even sure what's reasonable and what's just tin-hat conspiracy theory bullshit.

And it bothers me that Arthur Leigh Allen is convicted--in both Graysmith's books--based on circumstantial evidence and the fact that everyone who talked to him, both detectives and journalists, were subliminally terrified of him. They "just knew" that he was Zodiac, and that's not actually evidence. Now, the circumstantial evidence--which includes things like pipe bombs found in his basement--is pretty damning, and I don't in fact believe that an innocent* man was hounded to his grave. But it worries me that that *could* be what happened.

*"Innocent" being a relative term. Arthur Leigh Allen was a convicted child molester, and there were a lot of crimes they could have charged him for based on the 1991 search of his house (being a felon in possession of a firearm, for starters), even if none of them was what they were after.

Ron Felt says

In contrast to the first Zodiac book by the same author, I found this to be poorly written. It was confusing and the author jumped back and forth in time so much it was hard to keep track of what was happening when. Information was repeated and hard to keep straight. I think the author got a little too close to the subject and tried too hard to give every possible detail and in the process lost track of the best way to lay it out.

Therese says

It is hard for me to review this book because it is very long (like 450 pages) and almost entirely redundant of the first zodiac book. it has like 10 pages of new information spliced throughout & a bunch of painstaking minutiae in between. Had I not read the first Zodiac book, perhaps I would've liked this one. The only reason I did read it-- the first book did not conclusively "unmask" the killer -- so i had to read on and find out. right? wrong! just skip to the last page and save yourself the time.

Liyah Smith says

Too much imagery. Unnecessary imagery. The book was pretty interesting, but it was so long and so boring. I felt as if I was watching a five hour documentary showing green light gates and kids running off of a school bus. It was ok, but I wouldn't recommend it. Way too long and way too boring. Not of my liking. I just ended up abandoning the book and moving on to a new one that kept my interest all throughout.

erica says

The other reviews are correct... this book could have been a LOT shorter. The same information was

repeated again and again. We GET it, Robert Graysmith.

Truth is, everybody wanted Arthur Leigh Allen to be the Zodiac, including Allen himself. But he probably wasn't. Sure, there were a lot of coincidences that make Allen look like a good match for the killer, but the DNA didn't match.

Ugh. Long and repetitive. Obsessive. Don't read this. Read Graysmith's other Zodiac book. That one is excellent.

♥ Marlene♥ says

This is Robert Graysmith's second book about The Zodiac killer.

Author Robert Graysmith was on the staff of the San Francisco Chronicle when the hooded killer's first letter arrived. After 8 years of research Graysmith revealed 100 of facts never before released.. and his own theory of the Zodiac's true identity but they did not catch him.

Now 19 years after Zodiac was published it seems they have finally caught him.

Zodiac Unmasked!!

(I have just read Zodiac and can't wait to read this one.

Hardback

Update January 23st 2008

It has been a long time since I read this book but I recall I was very disappointed by this book. It promised answers but in honesty it were just guesses. Lots of repetition.

Andrea Hickman Walker says

This is a very interesting book. However, it's badly written, in need of serious editing, and very repetitive. Still a worthwhile read, if you have the brain power to keep everything straight (seriously, there was no need for so much jumping around the timelines), though the repetition will help with that. If it's the sort of thing that interests you, I'd certainly recommend it.

Lauren says

Being true crime obsessed, I can whole heartedly say I've never struggled to read a true crime book before. It was unnecessarily repetitive, at times I thought I was reading 3 chapters back. It mostly goes between talking about Arthur Leigh Allen and people who talk up his first book. It is to a point of unhealthy obsession with the man. I have no doubt Arthur Leigh Allen did unspeakable things that he wasn't charged for other than child molesting (which is despicable) but in all honesty I think the real unsub knew him and purposely framed him. It was a trail of bread crumbs to him. This book never needed to be written, I'll never re read

this and sadly wish I could get my money back. Spare your time and money.

Jon says

This is a good book for detailed descriptions of the crimes and the police procedure. However, the case for the suspect is circumstantial. What the book details is the systematic hounding by the author of his number one suspect, leading to serious invasions of his private life plus quite intrusive action taken by the police, using Graysmith's thesis as justification. The main suspect was hounded to his grave and cleared recently when his DNA did not match DNA known to belong to The Zodiac. Two stars for the history of the case but nothing for the thesis.

Jorge says

Hard to get into at first.

Graysmith jumps back and forth in the chronology of this decades-long murder case. The number of players involved (suspects, police, witnesses, Zodiac's victims and possible victims, journalists, relatives and friends of all of the above) also made this book hard to follow at first.

Maybe Graysmith assumes the reader has read his earlier book on this subject — I hadn't. But, Graysmith is an excellent descriptive writer and his obsession with the case becomes as interesting as the murder mystery itself.

In mid-read, I watched the 2007 film "Zodiac" which helped me at least put some faces to the names of the characters (although the real Paul Avery looked nothing like Robert Downey Jr.!).

The vast chunks of compelling content made slogging through the tedious parts worthwhile.

AMEERA says

3.75

Jim says

Thank whatever gods may be that this is finally over. The weeks I spent slugging through this I couldn't stop thinking that I could be reading something else! To begin with, let's give the devil his due...Robert Graysmith knows a LOT about the Zodiac killer. Probably more than anyone. He has poured years of his life into interviews with witnesses and investigators: in effect, conducting his own investigation. This was probably a good thing, because the police agencies seemed to be totally inept at the task. The Zodiac practically begged to be caught and probably would have been if there had been any sharing of data by investigating agencies. In any event, Mr Graysmith investigated and compiled so much data that he eventually wrote two books on the Zodiac Killer; this is the second of those books. Maybe the first one was

exciting.

An investigation is usually a dreary ordeal of endless rounds of interviews, covering the same old ground and asking the same old lame-ass questions. Graysmith drags the reader along with him on these seemingly endless rounds of interviews, dutifully relating every mind-numbing bit of information provided by each witness. Hell, half the book is in quotation marks. I kept asking how a book written about a serial killer could be so dull, but came to the conclusion that this one was written to capitalize on the success of the first book - basically filler, if you will. It was definitely unnecessarily long.

Don't get me wrong, Mr Graysmith is a competent writer, and he has me convinced that he knows the identity of the Zodiac Killer. If you are a Zodiac nut you will probably get your jollies by slugging through this. I was mildly interested when Zodiac II and Zodiac III made cameo appearances, but otherwise I found the book a tad on the dull side.

Tahsina Syeda says

The story of the Zodiac hunt is like a labyrinth; confusing, frustrating and mind-boggling, much like Zodiac himself.

Briar's Reviews says

Zodiac Unmasked was an interesting take on the real life incidents revolving around the Zodiac Killer.

This book could have been a LOT shorter than it is, there is almost so much content in this book I got bored (and I am OBSESSED with conspiracies and theories, I'll sit through long books and videos any day of the week). I almost quit this book completely because it was boring me to death. I did love all the research and information within this book, but it was almost too much.

This is one of many theories of who the Zodiac Killer was, and it truly is fleshed out. It may not be 100% correct, but it was a good read if you want to look into the information surrounding this theory.

The positives within this book is the amazing content within it, but that also ties with my major negative: it's long, repetitive and becomes quite boring due to those two factors. The theory itself is confusing and long, but that doesn't mean the book needs to be over 500 pages of repeating the same stuff over and over and over. I did enjoy the fact that the book was in chronological order, but I also felt that it didn't need to be. I would have loved all the hard hitting facts and awesome plot points first before all the boring, nitty, gritty details.

Overall, I'm not totally impressed with this book. It bored me to tears and I almost stopped reading it.

1 out of 5 stars.

Raven Tiger {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says

Excellent argument on the most likely identity of the Zodiac. I'm convinced tbh.
