

NONE SHALL SLEEP

By Ellie Marney

RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 14–18

THEMES: Good and evil, survival, female rage, family, law enforcement, sanity and insanity, fairytales

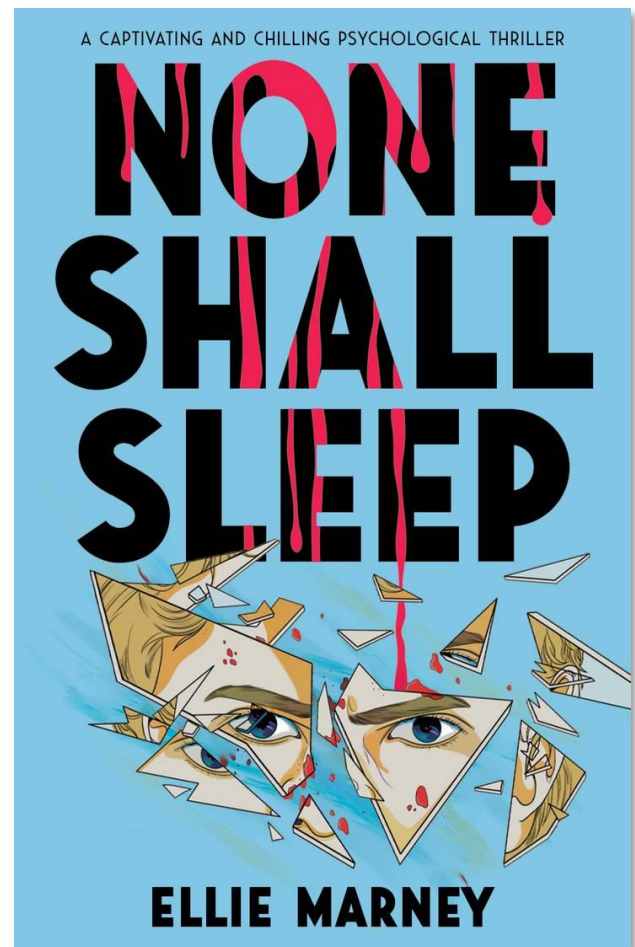
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INTRODUCTION

None Shall Sleep is a gritty, edge-of-your seat thriller positioned as a YA take on *The Silence of the Lambs*. Filled with ominous, tension-filled scenes involving the book's two young investigators interviewing murderers, then tracking one, the story has strong forward momentum that grips readers and keeps them turning pages. Forensic and FBI procedural processes provide fascinating insight into 80s-style investigation, and unexpected twists keep the reader guessing. All this is supplemented by the taut psychological cat-and-mouse game between the book's protagonist and a convicted serial killer.

STORY SUMMARY

It's 1982, and the innovative FBI Behavioural Science section is breaking new ground. Two teenagers – serial killer survivor Emma Lewis and US Marshal candidate Travis Bell – are recruited by the FBI to interview convicted juvenile killers and provide insight and advice on cold cases. But when the team is called in to give advice on an active case – a serial killer who exclusively hunts teenagers – things begin to unravel. Over Travis's objections, Emma becomes the conduit between the FBI and their best source of information: notorious nineteen-year-old sociopath Simon Gutmunsson. And although Simon seems to be giving them the information they need to save lives, he's an expert manipulator playing a very long game...

Can Emma and Travis stop a serial killer on the loose? Or will they fall victim themselves?

USE IN THE CLASSROOM

In the Year 9 and 10 classroom, *None Shall Sleep* is valuable for genre study. Teachers may use it as a jumping-off point for a larger examination of the psychological thriller genre, including watching films such as *Rear Window*, *War Games*, *Vertigo*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Jaws*, *Duel* (the 1971 Spielberg film), and *Coraline*. It is recommended for a Literature Circle, discussing the tropes of thriller fiction, or other crime/mystery fiction.

Study of *None Shall Sleep* will enhance student understanding of the interrelated strands of language, literature and literacy. Students will observe how interpersonal relationships between the characters of Emma, Travis, Kristin and Simon are developed, and how those relationships are navigated through language in the story's dialogue. The author's use of devices such as allusion, metaphor and evocative vocabulary can be further investigated, and students will be able to identify how the author's language choices contribute to the book's stylistic effectiveness.

As the story is set in America in the 1980s, students will be able to interpret, compare and reflect on the representations of characters in different social, historical and cultural contexts. Teachers may find it an effective text for an analysis of unfamiliar context, and for an investigation of the appeal of an individual author's literary style, contrasting it with the author's previous works.

Incorporating contemporary understandings of the thriller genre, teachers in the Year 9 and 10 classroom may find *None Shall Sleep* a useful text for examining how text structures and language features influence audience response. It may also be a productive case study for an evaluation of the social, moral and ethical positions in a text.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

BEFORE READING

Visual Literacy

Read the back-cover blurb, then look carefully at the front cover to analyse its visual elements, asking questions such as:

- What does the use of the shattered mirror suggest about the story?
- The bright colours of the book's cover make a contrast to the dark story. Why do you think the book was presented in this way?
- Is the dripping blood on the cover off-putting for teenage readers? Or do you think it's an essential part of the book's presentation?

First Chapter

Did the first chapter of *None Shall Sleep* hook you in? What elements did the author use to compel you to keep reading? Analyse your reaction to Chapter One by asking yourself the following questions:

- What effect was created by starting the novel from an adult point of view?
- What did you learn about the characters of Emma Lewis and Edmund Cooper and Travis Bell from the details in the first chapter?
- Did you expect that Emma would turn down Cooper's initial offer? Why/why not?
- How has the author used foreshadowing to draw the reader into Chapter Two?
- 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?

Point of View (POV)

Why do you think the author chose to make Emma's point of view the primary 'voice' in the novel? How might your reading experience have been changed if Travis had been the main narrator?

Primary Character: Emma Lewis

"[Emma] knows that if she can get a grip on it now, she can use the anger: she can funnel it down into the great storehouse inside herself, draw on it when her funds of energy are low."

Much is made of Emma's anger as a character trait in *None Shall Sleep*. Why is anger the driving force of Emma's character in the story? Why do you think Emma feels angry and how does she manage her anger during the course of the story? How is Emma's running used as a device in the story? Was it an effective one?

Primary Character: Simon Gutmunsson

We don't meet Simon Gutmunsson until Chapter Nine of *None Shall Sleep*. Why do you think the author held off Simon's introduction for so long? Do you think that strategy was effective? What details did the author include earlier in the story to build up Simon's character for the reader?

"His beauty is like a lightning bolt: shocking and brilliant and terrifyingly wild."

In the description above, the author uses language to indicate that Simon is good looking – what other phrases does the author use to show that Simon is attractive? Why do you think the author chose to make Simon 'beautiful' in *None Shall Sleep*? Was it an effective strategy?

Is Simon an interesting antagonist in the book? Do you think he is an evil person? Or is he a product of his upbringing? Who is the real villain in *None Shall Sleep* – Simon Gutmunsson, or the Butcher?

If anger is Emma's driving force, what is Simon's?

Secondary Character: Travis Bell

Travis Bell is the son of a US Marshal murdered by a serial offender. What clues are we given about Travis's personality, and his attitude towards law enforcement? Emma describes him as a 'true believer' of law enforcement – is he? Is he still a true believer by the end of the story?

What makes Travis an effective partner for Emma, and why do you think he was chosen for this role?

Secondary Character: Kristin Gutmunsson

Kristin Gutmunsson seems to play only a small role in the story initially, but hers is a pivotal role. What key things does Kristin bring to light in the story? Why do you believe Kristin is still loyal to her brother, after all his terrible crimes? How does Kristin influence Simon? How does Simon influence her?

Setting: Time and Place

None Shall Sleep is set during the summer of 1982. What small references to the time period help to locate the novel in 1982 for the reader? Why do you think the author made the choice to use this time period? Do you think the story would have been as effective if it had been set in the present day?

Look at a map of the area where *None Shall Sleep* is located: Quantico, Berryville, Annandale and Washington DC. Trace the route that the characters took during the course of the story.

Find out a little more about Quantico FBI training facility, and the history of FBI Behavioural Science (Behavioural Analysis).

Intertextuality: Title

Where does the title, *None Shall Sleep*, originate? Why do you think this title might have been chosen for this book? After finishing the book, circle back to the title and discuss if it was appropriate for the story that unfolded.

Extension Exercise:

Listen to 'Nessun dorma' sung by Luciano Pavarotti and read through the passage (page 306) where Emma once again prepares to interview Simon Gutmunsson in the asylum's chapel. Find out the story of *Turandot*, the opera featuring 'Nessun dorma', examine the lyrics of the aria and explain how they relate to this scene in the book.

Finale

Did you find the ending of *None Shall Sleep* satisfying? It is a 'bittersweet' ending in many ways – make a list of the 'sweet' aspects of the novel's ending, and compare it with the 'bitter' aspects. Was the ending consistent with what you had discovered of the characters to that point? Was the ending logical? How might you have ended the story differently?

Genre: Thriller writing

There are many different types of crime writing – mysteries, thrillers, romantic suspense stories, 'cosies', courtroom dramas, espionage action stories, and more. Consider the questions below on this genre:

- What are the key elements of each of the types of crime writing?
- *None Shall Sleep* is a thriller – what are the differences between a mystery and a thriller?
- Serial killers often feature in films, books and TV shows – what do you think makes them popular?
- Characters in thrillers are psychologically stressed, and sometimes experience distorted mental perception – they may be untrustworthy, and the suspense may be unsettling. Thrillers also frequently use the concept of 'the unreliable narrator' to create further tension.

What is an unreliable narrator? Much of the story is told from Emma's point of view – given her psychological background, is Emma an unreliable narrator? What do you think makes her reliable/unreliable?

- In a number of circumstances, Simon Gutmunsson makes a point of stressing to Emma that he has 'never lied' – but is everything Simon says strictly true? How does he navigate the grey areas of lying versus not lying to get his own way?
- *None Shall Sleep* offers a number of depictions of violence and trauma. But some of the key moments of violence are described in ways that leave out extreme descriptions of gore and focus on minor details, such as the description of the crime scene in Berryville (page 178). Why do you think the author has chosen to do this? Is it more or less powerful for the reader when the author suggests violence, rather than includes details of it?
- Why do you think the author chose not to include explicit descriptions of Emma's experience as a serial killer victim? In your opinion, did the author make the right choice?

AFTER READING

Visual Literacy

The cover of the book shows fragments of a mirror reflecting a face. Consider the following:

- After reading the book, can you identify the person reflected in the mirror? Why is it important that we see only a part of their reflected face?
- Do you think the image on the cover is an accurate depiction of the story? Why/why not?
- The cover illustration was created by Melbourne artist Janelle Barone. Is the style of the illustration suited to the story?
- Janelle Barone also created the US version of the book's cover – find it online and compare the two covers side by side. Do the Australian and US covers suggest different things about the story? Why do you think book covers are sometimes changed from country to country?

Dedication

The author's dedication is 'For all the scared, stubborn, angry girls'. What do you think this dedication means *after* reading the novel?

Debate

At the end of *None Shall Sleep*, Emma Lewis has to make 'a terrible choice' (page 369). Consider these questions:

- What was the choice she had to make? Was it the right choice? Why/why not?
- Divide into groups of two, one arguing that Emma made the right choice, and one arguing the opposite. Carefully consider everything you know about Emma and Simon's backgrounds and personalities to debate the arguments for and against.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RELATED TEXTS

FICTION

Small Spaces by Sarah Epstein

Black by Fleur Ferris

We Were Liars by E Lockhart

In the Skin of A Monster by Kathryn Barker

AUTHOR BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellie Marney is the multi-awarded author of nine crime fiction novels for young people, including the Every series, *No Limits*, *White Night*, and the Circus Hearts series, and she is one of the contributing authors of the ABIA-winning *Begin End Begin: A #LoveOzYA Anthology*. She has been behind the scenes at the Westminster Mortuary in London and interviewed forensic autopsy specialists around the world in search of just the right gory details – she may or may not know how to commit the perfect murder.

Ellie is a member of Sisters in Crime Australia, and is a regular speaker at festivals and events. She was one of the originators of the #LoveOzYA movement, which advocates for Australian YA literature, and she runs #LoveOzYAbookclub online. A qualified teacher, she lives in north-central Victoria with her partner (also a teacher) and their four sons.

IN THE WORDS OF THE AUTHOR

“Initially I was concerned that a story with such dark themes would be too hardcore for teenage readers, but then I remembered how those were the kinds of books I used to search out for myself when I was in high school!

“Serial killers are fascinating to me – I’ve been a ‘murderino’ (a true crime fan) for a long time, and one of the books that first drew me to the subject was *Mindhunter* by John Douglas, which was recently made into a Netflix series. Douglas was one of the leading lights of the FBI Behavioural Science section (now called Behavioural Analysis), which studied and interviewed serial offenders in order to catch new killers. I had this idea: the FBI in the late 70s and early 80s was really innovative... What if the FBI tried using juvenile interviewers to talk to juvenile murderers? And what if one of those juvenile murderers – a very clever and manipulative teenager – began offering insight into a current homicide case?

“I’m endlessly intrigued by both the psychology of serial murderers and the people who investigate them – because first of all, what drives a person to commit a series of murders? What kind of mental state do they inhabit? And second of all, what drives a person to investigate those kinds of offenders? How do they cope, having to look at all that darkness?

“I also love writing smart, psychologically complicated female protagonists, and Emma Lewis is both highly intelligent and full of rage, having survived horrific trauma. I knew that the book would be fast-paced, so having a character like Emma to keep the reader focused on the terrible human cost of murder was really crucial. The tense conversations between Emma and the ‘evil mastermind’, Simon Gutmunsson, were the most exciting scenes, and the hardest to write.”

– **Ellie Marney**

