



DON'T LOOK NOW

A NOVEL

*If a killer posted about his
victims online, would you click?*

MAX MANNING

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. Social media plays an important role in *Don't Look Now*, and the more I, Killer's following grows, the more he wants to kill. What do you think are the positives of social media? The negatives?
2. Why do you think people are drawn to I, Killer's posts? Do you think it's true that people have an inherent curiosity for the morbid?
3. If you saw I, Killer trending on social media, would you look at the posts? Why or why not? If you did, do you think you would hold some responsibility for the attacks?
4. Compare Blake and Fenton. How are they similar? How are they different? Why do you think they both are so intent on solving this case?
5. We see Blake seeking counseling for his PTSD. How does his PTSD affect him? Have you ever known anyone who has suffered from PTSD? What was that experience like?

6. Describe Fenton's relationship with his daughter, Tess. How do they get along? What are the challenges in their relationship? If you were Fenton, what would you do to keep Tess safe?
7. Do you think media outlets are responsible for the spread of I, Killer's message?
8. Is there a difference between a news source's responsibility to share the truth with the public and their urge to create content that will attract readers? Is that line crossed here? Are there any real-life examples of this?
9. Why do you think the Yard kicked Fenton off the case? Do you think that was a good decision?
10. Imagine you are part of the general public watching as the police make multiple mistaken arrests. What would your reaction be? Who do you think should be held accountable?
11. Describe Ince. Do you think he is dangerous to the public? What should his punishment be?
12. If you had to choose, whose career would you rather have: Fenton's, Blake's, or Vales's? Why?
13. What do you make of Leah and Blake's relationship? Do you think they have a future as anything other than acquaintances?
14. Do you agree that I, Killer is a psychopath? Describe him as a character. Do you think there is any hope that he can get better? Should he be held accountable for his actions?

15. Pretend the story continues past the ending. Do you think I, Killer returns? How?

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

What inspired you to write *Don't Look Now*?

As a newspaper reporter, I spent many years covering crime stories and attended numerous murder trials. I found myself developing a fascination for the workings of the criminal mind, and when I wasn't writing real crimes, I'd relax by reading crime fiction. I always thought that one day I would attempt to write a crime novel, and with *Don't Look Now*, I wanted to take the reader deep into the mind of a psychopathic killer.

Social media plays a big role in your novel, as I, Killer trends across multiple platforms. What do you think are the pros and cons of social media? Do you use any yourself?

The internet and social networks are incredibly powerful tools when it comes to communication and education. They can be used to empower the oppressed, strengthen the weak, spread kindness, and connect like-minded people across the world. Having said that, we all know what the drawbacks are. As well as being used as a force for good, social media can be used as a force for evil, by criminal

gangs, cyberbullies, hackers, sex offenders. I don't have a solution. The genie is out of the bottle. There is no going back. And yes, I do have a Twitter account. @maxmanningcrime.

We see many sections from I, Killer's point of view. Was it difficult to write from that perspective?

I found it fascinating, but please don't be alarmed! I can assure you that none of I, Killer's thoughts on life and death match my own. Imagination is a wonderful thing, and with a bit of knowledge and a lot of empathy, something that psychopathic serial killers don't possess, a writer can put himself or herself inside a character's head, hopefully to good effect.

Blake struggles with PTSD, Ince is a voyeur, and I, Killer is psychopathic. What kind of research did you do to bring these characters to life and make their struggles and complexities believable?

As a newspaper reporter, you tend to have dealings with people who suffer from all sorts of issues, and that can be incredibly useful when you are creating fictional characters. When covering crime stories, I certainly came in contact with people who displayed psychopathic traits, as well as victims of violence who suffered with PTSD. The internet, of course, is a good research tool, but I am careful not to trust everything I read online. When in doubt, find a real live expert to ask, or take a trip to the nearest public library.

Which character was the most challenging to write?

Blake is an extremely complex character, a good man who'd come face-to-face with evil. That confrontation threatened to scar him for life, but he found a way to heal.

Which character did you enjoy writing the most?

I have to admit that I definitely had a lot of fun creating the character I, Killer and putting myself inside his mind.

What do you want readers to take away from your novel?

I would be happy if readers are left feeling that they were drawn into a twisty, entertaining, but plausible story. I'd also like them to have strongly identified with at least one character and even be left wanting to know how life panned out for that person. It would also be satisfying if the story prompted readers to seriously think about how they would react if a killer used social media to turn murder into entertainment.

If you could give Fenton and Blake one piece of advice as they move forward with their lives, what would it be?

I would tell Fenton and Blake to put their differences behind them and shake hands. They clash because they are contrasting characters, but being so different is what makes them such a formidable team.

***Don't Look Now* has a great twist to it. What does your writing process look like, and how do you craft such an intricate thriller?**

To an outsider, I think my writing process would appear pretty chaotic. I always know how the story will begin and how it will finish. The bit in the middle takes on a bit of a life of its own, but it gets there in the end. I am definitely not a morning person and usually start writing in the afternoon and go on until late in the evening, covering the wall of my office with sticky notes as plot ideas spontaneously occur.

When you're not writing, what do you like to do in your spare time?

When I'm not writing, I'm usually reading. If I'm not reading, then I'm usually cycling. I spend so much time sitting at my desk tapping away at a keyboard that I like to get outside and exercise whenever possible.