

Unsolved! The History and Mystery of the World's Greatest Ciphers from Ancient Egypt to Online Secret Societies

Craig Bauer

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This code-cracking exploration will intrigue all those who appreciate the thrill of the chase.

Craig Bauer proves an able and entertaining guide to the world of real-life ciphers, codes, and encryption in his fascinating book *Unsolved! The History and Mystery of the World's Greatest Ciphers from Ancient Egypt to Online Secret Societies*.

Bauer brings impressive credentials to the subject: he serves as the associate professor of mathematics at York College of Pennsylvania, is editor in chief of the journal *Cryptologia*, and has been a scholar-in-residence at the NSA's Center for Cryptologic History.

With *Unsolved!*, Bauer focuses mainly on those ciphers and codes that have not yet been broken. This might have meant a very high-level jumping-on point for readers, but Bauer caters to newcomers while keeping things interesting for experienced code breakers as well. He provides examples of (relatively) simple code breaking that even novices can understand. Though the codes and explanations get progressively more complex, Bauer takes it slow, and writes in a down-to-earth, appealing style. By the time higher math comes into play late in the book, even arithmophobes may be able to follow along.

Unsolved! addresses many cases that have permeated the public consciousness, such as that of *The Voynich Manuscript*, as well as more obscure ones, like underground code-breaking scavenger hunts conducted in just the past few years. Discussion of the latter showcases the inventive ways that modern technology has impacted encoding and decoding messages.

While the book will appeal to anyone who enjoys good puzzles, it turns somewhat darker when Bauer reviews the facts surrounding the Zodiac Killer and other criminals. Those who prefer to avoid such grim topics might choose to skip such chapters, beyond which remains a fun and mysterious ride through spycraft, buried treasure, secret societies, and more.

Unsolved! is suited to all who enjoy the thrill of the chase—and perhaps makes it “likely that several of the ciphers ... will be cracked by readers before much time has passed.”

PETER DABBENE (May/June 2017)

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