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USA

The Butterfly Clues

by Kate Ellison

Ages: 14 Up

★“Fascinating. Ellison has the art of page-turning down flat, and readers will be swept up by both the terror—and the romance.”
—*Booklist Starred Review*

★“This book casts a spell over its readers.”—*SLJ Starred Review*

Summary:

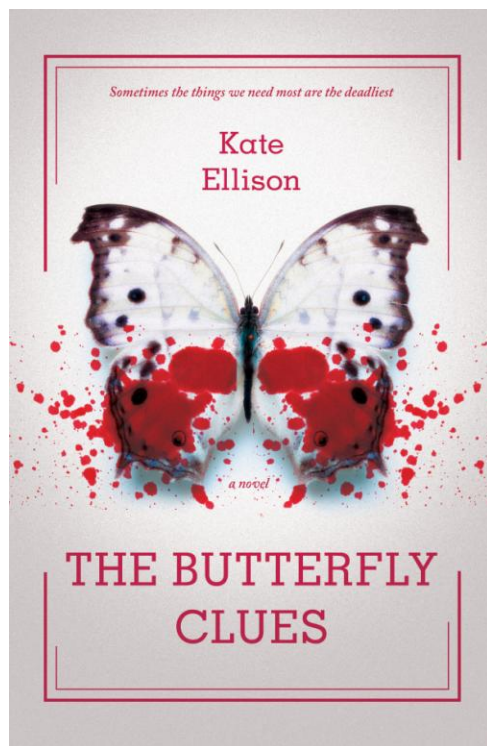
Penelope “Lo” Marin has always loved to collect beautiful things. But in the year since her brother’s death, Lo’s hoarding has blossomed into a full-blown, potentially dangerous obsession. When she discovers a beautiful antique butterfly figurine and recognizes it as having been stolen from the home of a recently murdered girl known only as Sapphire, Lo becomes fixated.

As she attempts to piece together the mysterious “butterfly clues,” with the unlikely help of a street artist named Flynt, Lo quickly finds herself caught up in a seedy, violent underworld—a world much closer to home than she ever imagined.

Kate Ellison’s debut novel is a tour de force thriller about a girl whose obsessive-compulsive collecting leads her down a dangerous path of secrets, mystery, and murder—where every clue she uncovers could be her last.

Discussion Questions:

1. Lo suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which causes her to tap-tap-tap-banana when she enters a room and is also the cause of her compulsive collecting. On page 15 she says she doesn’t choose to take things, she has to. Research obsessive-compulsive disorder. Based on what you learn, do you believe this statement is true for Lo? Explain your answer.
2. On their anniversary Bird and Sapphire were going to reveal their real names as a gift to each other. Why do you think they consider this to be the greatest gift they can give to each other? Why had they avoided sharing this information sooner?
3. Flynt hides the fact that he knows Sapphire from Lo when she first asks about the dead girl. Why do you think he doesn’t tell her the truth? How do you think it would



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have changed things if he had been honest with her initially?

4. Neverland is a seedy, dangerous part of town full of runaway teenagers like Flynt, Sapphire, and Bird. What is it about this neighborhood that draws in these troubled kids? Why do you think they've ended up here instead of someplace else?
5. Do you think that Flynt is being genuine on page 138 when he tells Lo that she inspires him to be a better person? Cite examples from the text that support your answer.
6. Why do you think Sapphire kept track of the days she has been gone from home? What does keeping track of the numbers signify for her?
7. Several times throughout the book Lo reveals that she would like to be "normal." What do you think Lo considers to be normal? In what ways does her life now differ from her normal ideal?
8. On page 173 Flynt asks Lo if her obsession with Sapphire is just "a way to avoid dealing with your own shit?" What do you think? Is Lo only trying to solve this case because she couldn't save Orin? Explain your answer.
9. Lo believes that by not answering Orin's letter she killed him. Do you think things might have turned out differently for the siblings if she had replied to him? Explain your answer.
10. At the end of Chapter 32 Lo and her father share a hug and she thinks, "the house seems to glow around us, to fill and grow lighter than it's been in a very long time and our tired, hopeful hearts thump against our chests and I know that things are going to change." (pg. 310) Do you think things at Lo's house will change after this moment? Why or why not?

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About the Author:

Kate Ellison trained as an actor in Chicago and has walked across the entire country of Spain. A painter and jewelry maker, Kate lives in Brooklyn, New York. *The Butterfly Clues* is her first novel.

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