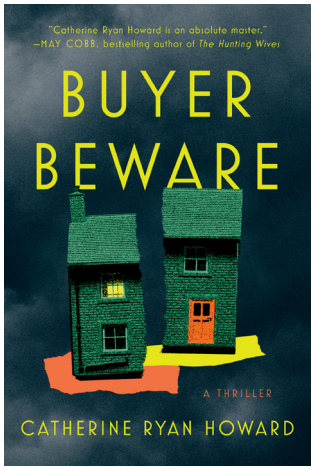

BUYER BEWARE

By Catherine Ryan Howard

READING GUIDE

1. "A location is not fully cleansed so long as the violence that occurred there is important to someone", wrote journalist Craig Taylor in *The Guardian*. Do you agree? Could you live in a home that had been the scene a murder? Why or why not?
2. *Buyer Beware* is set in Ireland where the text messaging service WhatsApp is hugely popular, to have big dreams is to have "notions", i.e. fanciful ideas, and there is a very low divorce rate (approx. 15%). What other cultural, societal or logistical differences did you notice between life in Ireland and life where you live? How did this affect your reading experience?
3. At what point did you realize who "Ellie" really is? Did you have suspicions? Before you knew, what secrets did you imagine she might be hiding?
4. Hannah is a character we don't often see in domestic thrillers which, almost by definition, predominantly feature married couples with children. Do you agree with this statement? Is it refreshing or frustrating to encounter a female character who doesn't want the things that she's expected to want? Does she deserve to be held responsible for a married man's infidelity? Would a man in her position be treated the same way?
5. Erin was only a teenager when she first met Jason, but she was lying to herself and others about their relationship almost from the get-go. Did she have any opportunity—and/or the capacity—to do things differently? She's a cautionary tale about how not making a decision is, in itself, making a decision. Do you agree?
6. Hannah points out the inherent misogyny in language such as spinster versus bachelor, childless as opposed to childfree, and how her mother refers to a couple as having "no family" when what she actually means is that they have no children. She also maintains that, in the eyes of modern society, "the most important thing a woman could achieve, still, was wifedom. There was nothing that could compete with getting picked." Considering that one of the most talked about books of the year centred on a tradwife, what does this tell us about being a woman today? Do you think Hannah is right?
7. One of the members of the Murder House Club talks about visiting Alcatraz and getting a chill in a particular area. He says, "I think it's like radiation. When [despair] gets released, the walls absorb it. Then, forevermore, it's leaking back out." In the opening scene, Annalise explains chemosignals, a type of pheromone. Have you ever got a weird feeling in a place where you knew something bad had happened, or later found out that it did? Where was it? How do you explain it?
8. "Good for her." How did you feel about the ending of the novel? Was it what you were expecting? Thinking about your first impressions of the novel, is it where you thought the book would end up? How do you feel about Annalise's actions?
9. What parallels can we draw between the stories of Annalise, Erin, and Hannah? What lives do you imagine for them beyond the final page?
10. Despite Ireland's relatively small size (it's about the size as the state of Indiana) and low crime rate, the genre "Emerald Noir" has exploded in recent years and is dominated by female writers. Have you read any other mystery/thriller novels set in Ireland? What is it about them that appeals to you? How are they different to novels written by, say, British or American writers?

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