



The Cracking Code Book

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Media type:

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Anyone who has struggled with the mathematics in Singh's acclaimed **Fermat's Enigma** will be delighted that he has turned his attention to a younger audience. The Code Book, originally written for the adult market, has now been adapted to produce a fascinating exploration of cryptography for younger readers. How young is not defined, but it will require a reader with stamina and concentration to make it to the end. The art of secret writing goes back to the ancient world, and Singh explains how history is punctuated with codes that have decided the outcome of battles or the death of kings and queens. There are marvellous tales of political intrigue, ranging from the Babbington plot to the passing of information in diplomatic bags and FBI wiretapping. Singh's explanations of how codes have evolved make fascinating reading and offer plenty of opportunities for a mental workout, including some cryptograms to solve yourself (no answers supplied). He describes codebreakers as 'linguistic alchemists, a mystical tribe', which gives a clear indication of his passion for the subject. Far from being an arcane science, the process of encoding information has an increasing part to play in our lives as we become more reliant on computers and the internet. Encryption, he stresses, has never been more important as a way of protecting our privacy and ensuring the success of the digital market place.

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