

Robert Harris, *Enigma*

LITERARY BITS

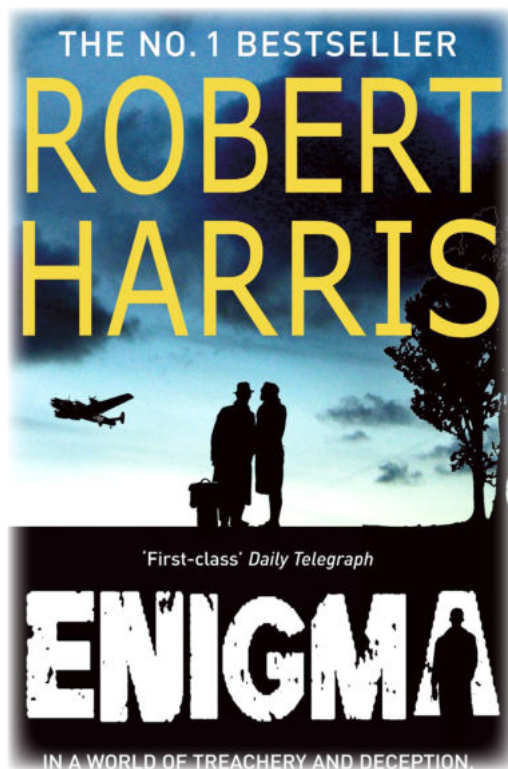
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROBERT HARRIS

Robert Harris was born in Nottingham, UK, in 1957. After graduating at Cambridge, he worked as a journalist for the BBC and assisted on shows that covered important current events. He became a political commentator, was the editor of *The Observer*, a UK political paper, and wrote articles on politics in many other newspapers. He started his writing career in the 1980s and since then he has written a number of fictional thrillers, often related to political events, and eight novels have become bestsellers. He wrote novels related to World War Two such as 'Fatherland' (1992), his first bestseller, and 'Enigma' (1995), but also stories set in other historical periods like 'Pompeii' (2003).



R. Harris



ABOUT THE NOVEL

ENIGMA

The novel is a blend between a historical novel and a mystery novel which mixes up reality and fiction. The story is set in 1943 when much of Nazi Enigma Code has already been cracked. However, Shark, the impenetrable cipher used to hide the movements of the U-boats, the German submarines, to the Allies, is still a mystery.

A top secret team of British cryptographers led by the brilliant mathematician Tom Jericho has the task of deciphering it.

They succeed in breaking the code, but unfortunately the Germans change it.

As an Allied convoy crosses the North Atlantic Ocean full of U-boats, Jericho has to solve three mysteries with the help of his girlfriend's roommate who is on the convoy: the code, whether his girlfriend Claire is a spy and if she has been murdered.

THE TEXT

THE GOLDEN RULE OF ENIGMA

An extract from chapter 6 when Jericho's team is dealing with the Allied convoy.

Cave had spent all night plotting the convoy's courses on two large charts of the North Atlantic – one issued by the Admiralty, the other a captured German naval grid, on which the ocean was divided into thousands of tiny squares. The cryptanalysts gathered round him. Cave's finger came down on a spot almost exactly midway between Newfoundland and the British Isles. 'There she is. She's shadowing HX-229.' He made a cross on the map and wrote '07:25' beside it.

Jericho said, 'What grid square is that?'

'BD 1491.'

'And the convoy course?'

'070.'

Jericho went back to his desk, and in less than two minutes, using the Short Signal Codebook and the current *Kriegsmarine* address book for encoding naval grid squares ('Alfred Krause, Blucherplatz 15':

Hut 8 had broken that just before the blackout) he had a five-letter crib to slide under the contact report.

RGHCDMIG

DDFGRX ??

The first four letters announced that a convoy had been located steering 070 degrees, the next two gave the grid square, the final two represented the code name of the U-boat, which he didn't have. He circled R-D and D-R. A four-letter loop on the first signal.

'I get D-R/R-D,' said Puck a few seconds later.

'So do I.'

'Me too,' said Baxter.

Jericho nodded and doodled his initials on the pad. 'A good omen.'

After that the pace of events began to quicken. At 08:25, two long signals were intercepted

emanating from Magdeburg, which Cave at once surmised would be U-boat headquarters ordering every submarine in the North Atlantic into the attack zone. At 09:20, he put down the telephone to announce that the Admiralty had just signalled the convoy commander with a warning that he was probably being shadowed. Seven minutes later the telephone rang again. Flowerdown intercept station. A second E-bar flash from almost the same location as the first. The Wrens hurried in with it.

KLYS QNLP

'The same hearse,' said Cave. 'Following standard operating procedure. Reporting every two hours, or damn near it.'

'Grid square?'

'The same.'

'Convoy course?'

'Also the same. For now.'

Jericho went back to his desk and manipulated the original crib under the new cryptogram.

KLYSQNLP

DDFGRX??

Again, there were no letter clashes. The golden rule of Enigma, its single, fatal weakness: *Nothing is ever itself – A can never be A, B can never be B.* It was working. His feet performed a little tap dance of delight beneath the table. He glanced up to find Baxter staring at him, and he realized, to his horror, that he was smiling.

'Pleased?'

'Of course not.'

But such was his shame when, an hour later, Logie came through to say a second U-boat had just sent a contact signal, he felt himself personally responsible.

clash: *scontro*
 crib: *trascrizione*
 Kriegsmarine: (German word)
Marina di Guerra
 loop: *ciclo continuo*
 pace: *ritmo*
 to plot: *tracciare*
 to steer: *sterzare*
 to surmise: *congetturare*

COMPREHENSION

1 Read the text and answer the questions.

1. How many people were involved in decrypting the code?
2. What charts did Cave use to plot the convoy?
3. What documents did Jericho use to get a five-letter crib?
4. What did the letters correspond to?
5. What happened at 08:25 and at 09:20?
6. How did Jericho get the new cryptogram?
7. What was Enigma's fatal weakness?
8. When did Jericho feel personally responsible?

ANALYSIS

2 Read the text again and search the Internet to answer the questions.

1. Underline the words in the text that refer to the field of cryptography.
2. Look at the map and find out where Newfoundland is. What is it called in Italian? What is it?
3. What is Flowerdown? Where is it?
4. Who are the Wrens?
5. What popular game uses square grids to locate objects?

DISCUSSION

3 Discuss.

1. What do you know about the Enigma Code?
2. In what way do you think that the crack of the Enigma Code contributed to the success of the Allies?
3. Discuss the advantages of encryption in everyday life.
4. Would you like to invent a cipher to encrypt your SMS messages?