

KATHLEEN ERNST WAS BORN in 1982 into the 1870s
Kathleen Ernst emerged from
WRITING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE PAST
the trees, precisely of a
cloud-studded blue sky.



Discussion Guide for *Tradition of Deceit*

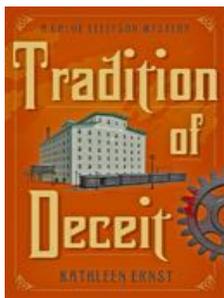
Chloe Ellefson Historic Sites Mystery #5

Written by Kathleen Ernst

Published by Midnight Ink Books

Chloe Ellefson was not having a good time. "So," Roelke said, sliding into his seat at the banquet table. "Are you enjoying yourself?" Chloe smiled brightly. "I am!"

Thus begins the fifth book in the popular, multiple award-winning, Chloe Ellefson Historic Sites mystery series. These stories combine history and mystery with a little romance, and are written for adults and mature teens who enjoy books *without* explicit sex, gratuitous violence, or gore.



Two Cities. Two Mysteries. Two Ways to Die.

Curator and occasional sleuth Chloe Ellefson is off to Minneapolis to help her friend Ariel with a monumental task: write a proposal for a controversial and expensive restoration project to convert an abandoned flour mill, used as shelter by homeless people, into a museum. When a dead body is found stuffed into a grain chute, Chloe's attention reluctantly turns from milling to murder.

Back in Milwaukee, Chloe's love interest Roelke is slammed by the news that a fellow police officer (his best friend) was shot and killed on duty.

Sifting through clues from both past and present, Chloe and Roelke discover dangerous secrets that put their lives—and their trust in each other—at risk.

Bestselling author Kathleen Ernst writes mysteries, historical fiction, and non-fiction books for adults and young readers. Her work has earned numerous honors, including an Emmy, a LOVEY, and nominations for an Edgar Allen Poe and multiple Agatha Christie mystery awards.

SPOILER ALERT! The following pages reveal key plot points.



1. Chloe was angry that Ariel and Roelke kept secrets from her, but in the end, she found herself keeping secrets from the police and Roelke. Are there times when it's acceptable for someone to keep secrets from the police, or from someone they love? Were Chloe and Roelke justified? Is "deceit" an appropriate word if a person does not actually lie, but withholds information?
2. The *wycinanki* (pronounced vee-chee-non-kee) became an important symbol in the story. What did it reflect and reveal about Magdalena, Frania, Lidia, and Helen?
3. The plight of homeless people is a recurring plot point. In Minneapolis, in the period between the book's setting and the opening of the Mill City Museum, advocates occupied the abandoned mill to protest plans to revitalize the mill complex and riverfront area—and the resulting eviction of the homeless people living there.

The mill was a historic structure of international significance; there were no adequate resources to assist the people living there in the 1990s. Did the city and state make the right decision to create the museum and adjacent offices, shops, and condominiums?

4. The abuse of power is a major theme in *Tradition of Deceit*. What examples appear within the story? How are the abusers similar and different?
5. For the first time in the series, readers meet Roelke's brother Patrick. Based on the backstory revealed in *Tradition of Deceit*, do you think that Roelke's feelings about and behavior toward Patrick are fair? Should he try to forge a better relationship with Patrick?
6. Toby tried to protect his sister Ariel; Sister Mary Jude tried to protect the mill residents; Rick tried to protect his friends. In each case good intentions led to complex problems. Were the actions justified? Should they have made different choices from the beginning?



7. Flour, bread, and baking is a major motif in the mystery. Are there recipes in your family, ethnic group, or community that have been preserved and celebrated? Why are they important?
8. Different characters in the book have different experiences with religion or spiritual faith—Sister Mary Jude, Roelke, Chloe, Lidia. How are their experiences different; how are they similar?
9. For those who have followed the series, how do you feel about the way that Chloe and Roelke’s relationship has been developing? Do you think they have a future together?
10. Jody and Chloe are confronted with the reality of caring for cops—both the toll the job takes on officers and the knowledge that they face potentially dangerous and deadly situations on duty every day. Could you handle a relationship with a police officer, fire fighter, or someone in military service? What advice would you have?

Hosting a discussion? Consider serving Old-Time Cinnamon Jumbles. Download the recipe from this book’s page on Kathleen’s website. Or, invite guests to bring their favorite Gold Medal Flour recipe treats.

You might also ask participants to bring examples of folk art important to their family or ethnic group. Or you could provide origami paper, pencils, scissors, and patterns to let everyone try their hand at wycinanki.

Kathleen did extensive research when writing this book. Some of her discoveries ended up influencing the story; some appear in the book. A rich mix of these ‘behind the scene’ details about the people, places, and the past that went into the creating this book are available online.

In addition to this guide, Kathleen’s website includes interactive custom Google maps showing where key scenes are set in Milwaukee and Minneapolis, a slide show of story-related artifacts and descriptions, an author’s note, book reviews, author interviews, book-related blog posts, and the recipe.

You can discover all this and more at www.kathleernerst.com/deceit.