REACHING READERS

We understand the importance of libraries and independent bookshops to our industry and believe that part of this importance lies in the fact that they provide a social, vibrant and interesting place for readers to talk about books. This project provides a template for a book-based event which will engage with regular readers and pull in a new audience. This traditional murder mystery has the accessibility of a familiar format – we've all played Cluedo or watched Poirot – but gives readers the chance to expand this experience by discussing their favourite crime fiction across the range of the genre. There are opportunities for income generation through books and tickets sales, for developing partnerships with community organisations and between libraries and bookshops, and for reader development training for frontline staff. But above all, it's great fun.

What we provide

- A script for 4 actors. This is loosely based on Ann Cleeves' Vera Stanhope novel *The Glass Room*, though the solution is different from that in the book, so there are no spoilers.
- A crime scene report prepared with the help of a real crime scene manager and a forensic soil scientist.
- PDFs of professionally designed posters, tickets and the competition form ensuring the promotional material looks attractive.
- A running order and guide for planning the event
- A prize
- Access to support and advice
- A template press release to send out to local media

What you need

- 4 actors – 2 men and 2 women. They don't need to learn lines but should be confident about reading a short monologue in front of an audience. These could be staff members, but if you approach your local amateur dramatic society or FE college performance students, you could be introducing new people into your shop or library.
- Someone to host and chair the event. This isn't a daunting task and we can provide a DVD so you can see exactly how it works.
- Books by Ann Cleeves for sale. Libraries can do this through Pan Macmillan, through their usual library supplier or by inviting a local bookseller to sell on their behalf.
- Scrap paper and pencils so people can take notes – some do take this event very seriously!

THE READING AGENCY

RUNNING ORDER

1) Welcome and housekeeping

2) Introduction

(No need to follow this word-for-word – just to give you an idea. But this is a tricky puzzle and a mention of Christie might just point your audience in the right direction).

This evening we're not in ..... but in the Writers' House, a fortified farm on the Northumberland coast. A group of aspiring authors has gathered here for a residential course to learn the art of the crime short story. This afternoon, the body of Tony Ferdinand, course tutor, academic and literary star-maker, was found in the summer house in the garden. In the tradition of the Golden Age detective novel only the people in the house could have committed the murder. One of the suspects standing before you is a killer and your task is to decide which of them stabbed the unpleasant and unloved Ferdinand. If you enjoy Agatha Christie and understand classic crime fiction, you can use your little grey cells to solve the mystery.

3) Witness statements

Introduce the witnesses in turn and they step forward to read their statements:

- Joanna Tobin, student at the Writers'House, small-holder and neighbour of Vera Stanhope.
- Godfrey Rickard, guest lecturer and bestselling crime writer.
- Nina Backworth, tutor, academic and writer.
- Lennie Thomas, student at the Writers' House.

4) Present the scene of crime report

Copies will be available for your audience to consider, but you might want to talk them through the evidence.

5) Interval

During this time you can offer refreshments and sell books. If your actors are sufficiently confident, they can stay in role and mingle with the audience answering their questions.

RUNNING ORDER

6) Decision time

Call your audience back to their seats, hand out the competition form, and ask them to decide who killed Tony Ferdinand and why. (The why is obviously important – they have a one in four chance of being right . . .) Make sure everyone writes their name on the form. Collect them in. While your volunteers are choosing the reader who has come closest to the solution, ask readers for their favourite crime titles, or suggest crime fiction to travel to, or present recent books in stock. (The Bello imprint is republishing Golden Age crime and their new titles might be a great start to a discussion.)

7) Confession

Ask the murderer to make themselves known. It's very corny, but get all your suspects to start rising from their seats, before Godfrey is left standing. He reads the confession.

8) The winner is announced and a prize is given