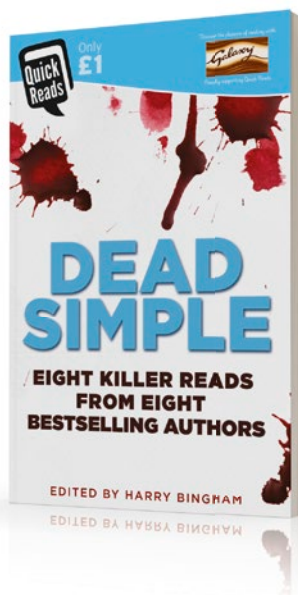




Learning with Quick Reads

Bite-sized books by bestselling authors



Dead Simple edited by Harry Bingham

About the book

Dead Simple is a thrilling collection of short stories from some of the best crime writers around. The stories include the perfect murder and an unusual way to solve crimes. From prison cells to cosy living rooms, these dark, chilling tales will grip you with every twist and turn.

This collection of short stories includes

Hardscrabble by Mark Billingham

The Funeral by Clare Mackintosh

Dead Men Tell No Tales by James Oswald

Old Tricks by Jane Casey

Tell No Lies by Angela Marsons

The Perfect Murder by Harry Bingham

The Night Before the Hanging by Antonia Hodgson

Bird in a Cage by C.L. Taylor

Authors

(Top row, left to right)

Mark Billingham

Clare Mackintosh

James Oswald

Jane Casey

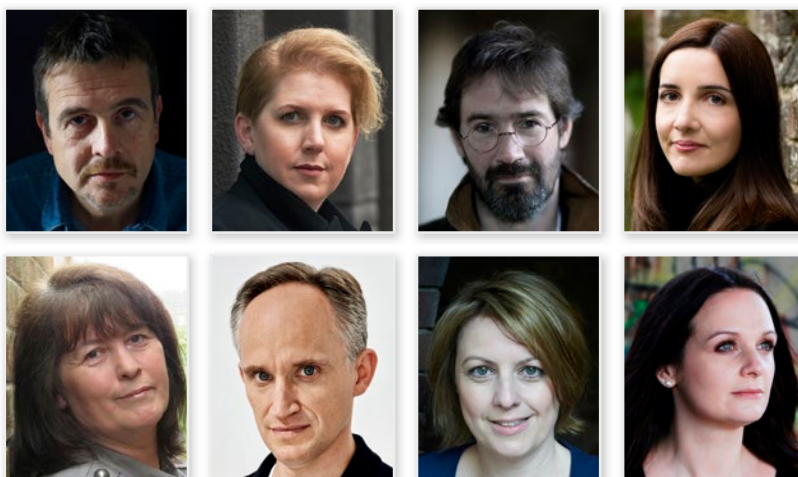
(Bottom row, left to right)

Angela Marsons

Harry Bingham

Antonia Hodgson

C.L. Taylor



To find out more about Quick Reads titles, visit www.readingagency.org.uk/quickreads.

If you are a teacher, librarian or practitioner using Quick Reads, read our 'notes for practitioners' section.

Tweet us @quick_reads.



Here is a range of activities to try as you read the book. See the key at the bottom of the page to explain the symbols we've used.

Before reading *Dead Simple*



- Read through the information about the eight authors on the first few pages.
- Which author or authors most interest you? Why? Look at the titles of the eight stories.
- Which title appeals the most? And the least? Explain or think about why.
- Do you think you can tell something about a story from its title? Why or why not?

After reading the book...

These are some questions to think about individually or as a group.

- Which is your favourite story and why?
- Which is your least favourite and why?
- Write a review of one of the stories to share with others. In your review, write a bit about what happens in the story (but don't give away the ending) and about whether you recommend this story to others or not and why.
- Also, choose one of these stories to read aloud. Record your voice. Give it to someone else to listen to.

Before reading *Hardscrabble* by Mark Billingham



- What do you think 'Hardscrabble' means?
- Have you ever played Scrabble? Why or why not?

After reading



- Write down some notes about the two main characters in this story.
- Copy out some words that you have found in the story that describe them and also write down your own thoughts about each man.
- Are these men similar to each other? Or different?
- What is going to happen next? Why do you think so?

KEY



- What picture of prison life does this story give us?
- From your own experience, or from what others have told you, is this typical of prison life?

Before reading *The Funeral* by Clare Mackintosh



- This is a story that starts at a funeral. Talk or think about your own experience of funerals.
- Talk to others and/or use the internet to find out about funeral traditions in other countries or cultures. Share what you have found.

After reading



- How could you describe what this story is about?
- Write a *summary* of this story in only three sentences.



- What do you know about Sarah, the *narrator*?
- How would you describe her? Why?
- Find a sentence or two from the story that told you something important about Sarah. Share these with others or think about why this/these sentences told you so much.
- In your own words, describe what Sarah did.
- What is happening to Sarah at the end of the story?
- Did Elaine mean for this to happen? Why do you think so?

Before reading *Dead Men Tell No Tales* by James Oswald



- Do you think it is true that 'dead men tell no tales'? Why or why not?

KEY

After reading



- Where does this story take place?
How do you know?
- Who is your favourite character in the story and why?
- Why was the young man killed?



- Go back and find, and note down, every time McLean has contact with 'the ghost'.
- Do you think it really is a ghost? What makes you think so?



- Write another paragraph or page of the story, explaining who the young man was and why he was killed.



- The city of Edinburgh is known for ghost stories and sightings. Talk to others, visit a library or use the internet to find out what you can about ghosts in Edinburgh.
Take some notes and share your notes with others.



- Detective or 'murder mystery' stories are very popular. Why do you think so many people like reading about such horrible things? And, do you?

Before reading *Old Tricks* by Jane Casey



- Have you heard the phrase 'old tricks' before? Do you know the full expression it comes from?
If not ask around and find out what it means.

KEY

After reading



- Who is tricking whom in this story?
- Alone or with someone else, work through the story, page by page, talking or thinking about this question.



- Find and note down the words or phrases that Nina uses to trick the man.
- Find and note down the words or phrases that the man uses to trick Nina.
- Find and note down the words or phrases that told us about the final trick.



- Draw a picture of Nina, of the man, and of Judith. Draw a picture of the man's living room. Look back through the story to find details to add to your drawings.



- What does this story make you think about? Does it scare or worry you? Why?

Before reading *Tell No Lies* by Angela Marsons



- Why do people tell lies?
- Is it easy to tell lies? Easy to stop?
- Are there times when it is OK to tell lies?

After reading



- In your own words, write a few sentences, or a few pages, about what this story is about.
- If possible, share your writing with someone else and talk about what you have written.



- When did you first realise that the narrator was the victim of domestic abuse? Find the words or phrases that told you.

KEY

- Does the end of this story surprise you? Why or why not?



- Think about what you know about domestic abuse.
- Use a library, the internet or ask others to find out about what help is available close to you for victims of domestic abuse.

Before reading *The Perfect Murder* by Harry Bingham



- Is there such a thing as a 'perfect murder'? Explain your thoughts.

After reading



- Read the first page of the story again out loud. And again.
- If you are in a group, act it out, with one person reading the narration, one person reading what the husband says and one person reading what the wife says.
- Talk or think about what this first page tells us about these two people and their marriage.



- Write your own list of 'THINGS TO DO BEFORE I DIE'.



- Write a paragraph about the narrator. Write about who he is, what he does, and what kind of man he is. ('He is...')
- Now imagine you are the man and write a paragraph about 'yourself' (the man) from 'your' point of view. ('I am...')

Before reading *The Night Before the Hanging* by Antonia Hodgson



- What is a 'hanging'?
- Use the library or internet to try to find out the last time someone was sentenced to hanging in Britain.

KEY

After reading



- Use a library or the internet to see what you can find out about Newgate Prison. Write some notes. Present what you have found to others.



- Find a map of present-day London and mark Newgate Prison and the district of St Giles (see p 97) on the map.
- What are these areas of London like now?



- What did Samuel Fleet do to Charles Simmons and why?
- On which pages of the story do we learn about Jenny Drake? And what do we learn?
- Does Charles Simmons deserve his punishment? Why do you think so?

Before reading *Bird in a Cage* by C.L. Taylor



- Do you like looking at birds in cages? Why or why not?
- Any guesses what this story is about?

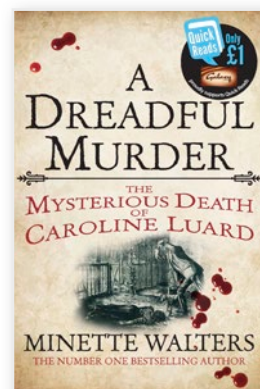
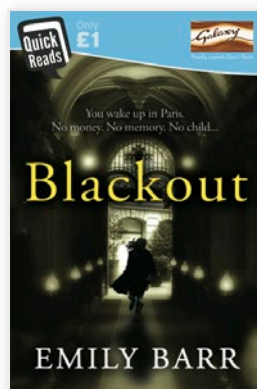
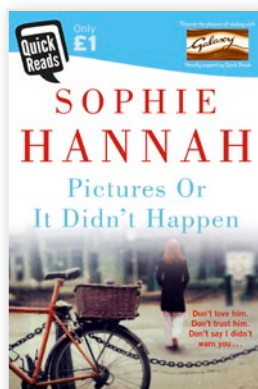
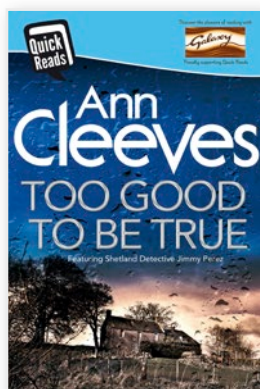
After reading



- In your own words talk about everything we know about the narrator of this story, her friends and family.
- What do you think is going to happen next?

KEY

If you liked this, you might enjoy these other Quick Reads...



Continuing your reading journey

As well as Quick Reads, The Reading Agency runs lots of programmes to help keep you reading.

Reading Ahead invites you to pick six reads and record your reading in a diary in order to get a certificate. If you're thinking about improving your reading or would like to read more, then this is for you. Find out more at www.readingahead.org.uk

World Book Night is an annual celebration of reading and books on 23 April, which sees passionate volunteers give out books in their communities to share their love of reading. Find out more at worldbooknight.org

Reading together with a child will help them to develop a lifelong love of reading. Our **Chatterbooks** children's reading groups and **Summer Reading Challenge** inspire children to read more and share the books they love. Find out more at www.readingagency.org.uk/children

KEY

Reading Discussion/reflection Writing ICT Maths Explore

These resources have been designed for those using Quick Reads independently, as well as for those using Quick Reads in a group.

As teachers, you could therefore refer your students to these resources as independent study material, or use them with groups in the classroom. We have included activities focussed on discussion, reflection, close reading, writing, ICT, mathematics/numeracy and other ways to explore a topic or theme.

Quick Reads have been created specifically for adults who are less confident in their reading, who may not see themselves as readers or who may feel that it has been a long time since they have read. They will also appeal to younger people who feel daunted by reading their first book.

In the terms of the English adult literacy core curriculum, or Functional Skills levels, they are often seen as suitable for those at Entry 3, Level 1 or Level 2. Adult literacy or functional skills English learners below Entry 3 may find them too challenging (as may some Entry 3 learners), but everyone is different, so it is always worth having a look.

ESOL learners - those learning or developing their English as an additional language - may also find Quick Reads a helpful introduction into reading books in English and a useful way to develop vocabulary and awareness of language structures. Quick Reads are often used by ESOL teachers teaching at Entry 3 or above. What works will individual learners will depend on the learners, their confidences, their language and literacy backgrounds and the particular books themselves.

As with all resources, Quick Reads could potentially be used with a range of groups and levels, depending of course on how you use them. It is worth remembering that Quick Reads are authentic texts - real books written by real authors - and so can be particularly motivating for adult learners.

We have written these resources so that they are accessible by those who would also find Quick Reads accessible. However, the needs, strengths and interests between and within groups vary (whether your groups is a Functional Skills English class, an adult literacy class, a GCSE class or an ESOL class) and so you may want to adapt the language at times, as well as adapt and play around with the ideas. You may find that you prefer some activities to others and that you will want to adjust them for your particular group(s) and context(s).

We hope that if you do use these with your students, you try things out that you haven't tried before, and let us - and your colleagues - know what worked well and not so well.

Email us at quickreads@readingagency.org.uk

To find out more about **Quick Reads**, visit www.readingagency.org.uk/quickreads

Resources compiled by Sam Duncan, Senior Lecturer in Adult Education and Literacies, Department of Education, Practice and Society, UCL Institute of Education