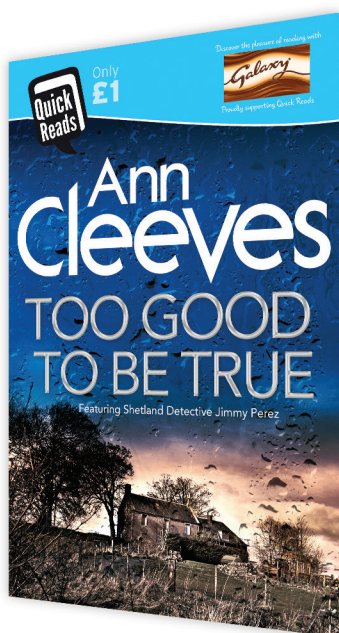




Learning with Quick Reads

Bite-sized books by bestselling authors

Too Good to be True by Ann Cleeves



About the book

When young teacher Anna Blackwell is found dead in her home, the police think her death was suicide or a tragic accident. After all, Stonebridge is a quiet country village in the Scottish Borders, where murders just don't happen.

But Detective Inspector Jimmy Perez soon arrives from far-away Shetland when his ex-wife, Sarah, asks him to look into the case. The local gossips are saying that her new husband Tom was having an affair with Anna. Could Tom have been involved with her death? Sarah refuses to believe it – but needs proof.

Anna had been a teacher. She must have loved kids. Would she kill herself knowing there was nobody to look after her daughter? She had seemed happier than ever before she died. And to Perez, this suggests not suicide, but murder...

About the author

Ann Cleeves is the author behind ITV's *Vera* and BBC One's *Shetland*. She has written over twenty-five novels, and is the creator of detectives Vera Stanhope and Jimmy Perez – who are characters loved both on screen and in print. Her books have now sold over 1 million copies worldwide.

Before she started writing, Ann worked as a probation officer, a cook at a bird observatory and an assistant coastguard. She is a member of 'Murder Squad', working with other British northern writers to promote crime fiction. In 2006 Ann was awarded the Duncan Lawrie Dagger (CWA Gold Dagger) for Best Crime Novel, for *Raven Black*, the first book in her Shetland series. In 2012 she was enrolled into the CWA Crime Thriller Awards Hall of Fame. Ann lives in North Tyneside.

Visit Ann's website www.anncleeves.com

Follow her on Twitter @AnnCleeves



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 #GalaxyQuickReads

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



- This novel is called 'Too Good to be True'.
Have you heard people saying that something or someone is 'too good to be true'? What does this mean?
- Have you had an experience where you felt something or someone was 'too good to be true'? And were you right?



- The front cover tells us that this novel features a Detective Inspector Jimmy Perez from Shetland. Where is Shetland? What do you know about Shetland?
- Use a library, the internet, or ask around to see what you can find out about Shetland.
- Use a library, the internet or a local travel agent to find out how long it would take to get from Inverness (a city in the North of Scotland) to Lerwick in Shetland. How much longer would it take by boat than by air?



- Have you read detective books before? Do you watch any detective programmes on TV? If so, which are your favourites and why?
- Detective fiction is a very popular *genre*, or type of book.
Why do you think this is the case? Doesn't it seem strange that people would like to read about murders or violence?



- Look at the very first printed page, containing 'praise for the Shetland novels'.
- Choose at least one word that you don't know or aren't sure about. First try to guess its meaning from the *context* and then look up in a dictionary. If you can, explain the meaning of this word to someone else.
- Does reading praise for an author encourage you to read their work? Why or why not?

KEY



- Read the 3rd printed page about Ann Cleeves.
Which TV detective programmes are based on her work?
Have you seen either of these?
If you can, watch one of them and tell someone else what you thought about it.
- Finally, read the dedication on the 7th printed page.
What are your experiences of library staff?
And who has encouraged your reading?

Chapter 1



- Read the title of this chapter.
Who has called for help and who is coming to help?
- What do we know about Jimmy, Sarah and Tom.
Which adjectives could we use to describe them?
- Why does Jimmy agree to help?
Would you have agreed, if you were Jimmy? Why or why not?
Find one line in the chapter that explains why Jimmy agrees to help.
- What do we know about the woman who died?
- From what you have read so far, what do you think happened?



- Do you know of any organisations that help people who want to commit suicide? Use the library or the internet to find out more.



- How did Jimmy get from Shetland to the Scottish Borders? How long did it take him? Based on what the book tells you, and what you can find out from libraries, information centres or the internet, estimate Jimmy's travel time and costs a) driving and b) taking the train.

KEY

Chapters 2, 3 and 4



- Look at the titles of these three chapters.
- If you are working in a group, write the name of each chapter at the top of a sheet of flipchart paper. Divide into three smaller groups and each take one of the sheets of paper. Spend ten minutes recording everything that Jimmy Perez learns from The Landlady/The Neighbour/The House. Use words and pictures. After ten minutes, each group moves on to the next sheet, this time reading and adding to what the others have already written. Continue until each group has written on each sheet. Each small group present the evidence from one sheet of paper to the rest of the group. Everyone ask questions and discuss.
- If you are working alone, divide a piece of paper up into three parts: The Landlady, The Neighbour and The House. Use words and pictures to record everything that Jimmy Perez learns from each.



- Why is the freshly cleaned glass that Jimmy finds in the cupboard so important?
- What do you think happened?
- What do you think Jimmy should do next?

Chapters 5–8



- Continue the above process with new sheets of paper for each of these chapters: The Village, The Farm, The School and The Colleague.
- Review your findings. Do you know what happened yet?



- What have we learnt about this particular village?
- Draw a map of the village and add as many places as you can.
- Have you ever lived in a small village like this, or do you live in one now? What are some advantages of village life? And disadvantages?

KEY



- Write one sentence about each of the characters we have met so far.
- From what we know about all the characters we have met so far, who do you think you might be friends with if you lived in this village? And who wouldn't you be friends with? Why?
- Who is the mystery man?

Chapters 9, 10 and 11



- Continue the above process with new sheets of paper for each of these chapters: The Hotel, The Parents, and The Watcher.
- Look at all your 'evidence.' How did Anna die?



- Why did Sarah start the petition to get rid of Anna? What do you think about what Sarah did?

Chapters 12 and 13



- Who is the father of Anna's daughter?
- Does this change how you feel about Tom? Sarah?
- Does this change your thoughts on Anna's death? Why or why not?



- What does it mean, on page 80, when it says Perez "had Cassie to look after now, and he should be more careful." Who is Cassie and why does Perez have to be so careful?
- Imagine you are Perez. Write a postcard to send back home to Cassie.



- Who killed Anna? If you are in a group, have a *debate*, dividing into groups according to who you think did it. Argue your cases.

KEY



- Are you surprised by what really happened? Why or why not?



- Imagine you are writing a newspaper article about this case for the village paper. Explain what happened as clearly as possible. Think about where you need to start and what information you need to include.

OR

- Imagine you are Gail. Write your brother a letter explaining what you did and why.

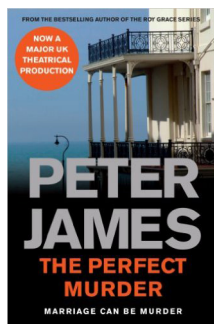
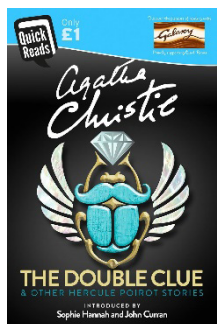


After reading the book...

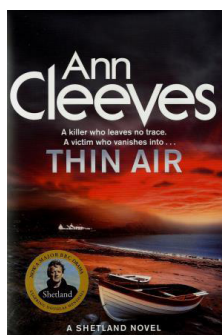
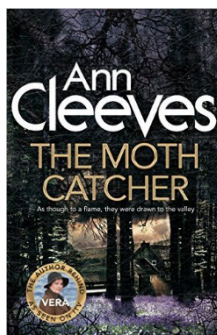
These are some questions to think about individually or as a group

- Would you agree that lack of money or fear of poverty was really to blame for Anna's death? Why or why not?
- In Sarah's letter to Perez at the end of the book, she writes "Now my life's perfect." Is any life perfect? Is life meant to be perfect?
- Were Gail and Anna really friends at some point in the past? Could somebody do something like this to their friend? Does this happen?

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



You might also enjoy these other books by Ann Cleeves.



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

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

As practitioners, 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 and reflection, close reading, writing, ICT, maths 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. Quick Reads, and these materials, aim to develop lifelong reading habits.

In the terms of the English Adult Literacy Core Curriculum levels, Quick Reads 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 are likely to 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 – often find Quick Reads a helpful introduction to reading books in English and a useful way to develop vocabulary and awareness of language structures. Quick Reads are frequently used by ESOL teachers teaching at Entry 3 or above. What works with individual learners will depend on the learners and the particular books.

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. However, the needs, strengths and interests between and within groups vary (whether your group is a Functional Skills English class, an adult literacy class, a GCSE class or an ESOL class) and so at times you may want to adjust the language, 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 rework 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