READING PRACTICE 1

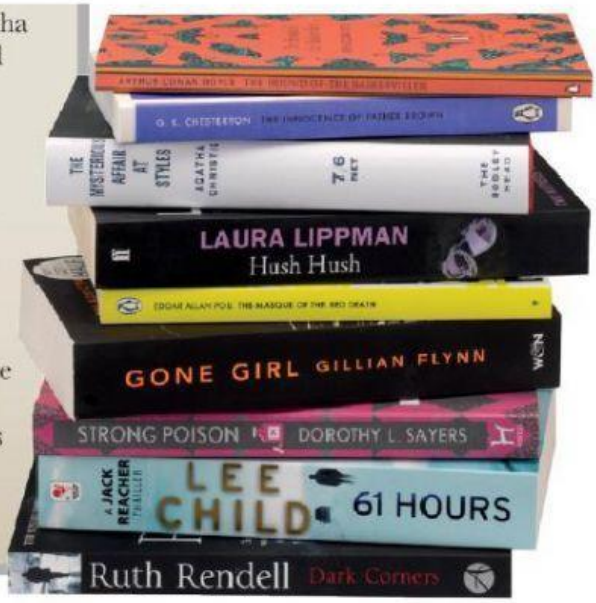
How the modern detective novel was born

Millions of readers, like me, love the books of Gillian Flynn and Ruth Rendell, of Lee Child and Laura Lippman. But most fans of modern crime fiction know very little about the writers who invented the modern detective novel.

Many of the best early detective stories were short stories. Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) was probably the author of the first detective story. Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) created perhaps the most famous detective, Sherlock Holmes. Father Brown was also a detective who was nearly as popular as Holmes; he was created by G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936). Father Brown only appeared in short stories, and Sherlock Holmes appeared in over 50 short stories and only four novels, including *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, where he solves the mystery of an enormous ghost dog.

In 1916, in her book *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Agatha Christie introduced a new type of detective novel, and a new detective, Hercule Poirot. This book was a bit different because the plot was more important than the characters and the writer asked readers to guess the name of the murderer. Later, in the 1930s and 40s, Dorothy Sayers wrote detective novels where the relationships between the characters were sometimes more interesting than the plot.

Reading can give us a fascinating view of the past, and when we read these detective stories and novels we can also learn something about how people lived and thought in the 19th and 20th centuries. These authors are still very popular. They influence present-day authors such as J.K. Rowling and they are probably going to inspire crime fiction for decades to come.



Adapted from the British press

Read the article once. Do you have any favourite detectives or detective writers?

Read the article again. Mark the sentences **T** (true) or **F** (false).

1 Gillian Flynn and Lee Child are modern crime writers.
2 Sherlock Holmes only appeared in short stories.
3 Agatha Christie's novels were similar to older crime fiction.
4 She wanted her readers to try to solve the crimes themselves.
5 If you read detective fiction from the 19th and early 20th century, you can learn about how people thought and behaved.
6 Not many people now enjoy Dorothy Sayers's books.