



Meath County Council Library Service
comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Meath County Council Library Service Book Club Kit

There's no such thing as a perfect family

LET THEM LIE

Florence
GILLAN



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council



Notes To Readers



This kit was created for book clubs to use in their discussions of *Let Them Lie* and contains spoilers


Contents Warnings

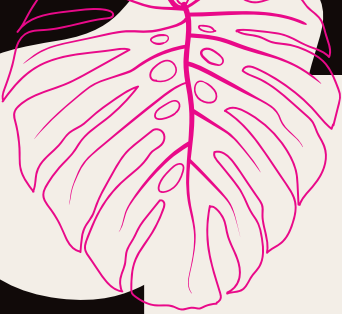
Please be aware that *Let Them Lie* contains content that may be triggering including depictions of violence, crime, death, mental health and family trouble





Reading Group Discussion Questions

1. For the person who chose this book: What made you want to read it? What made you suggest it to the group for discussion? Did it live up to your expectations? Why or why not?
 2. How is the book structured? Does the author use any narrative devices like flashbacks or multiple voices in telling the story? How did this affect your reading of the story and your appreciation of the book? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
 3. Talk about the author's use of language/writing style. Have each member read his or her favorite passage out loud. (You might want to warn them ahead of time that they'll be doing this so they'll be prepared.) How does this particular passage relate to the story as a whole? Does it reveal anything specific about any of the characters or illuminate certain aspects of the story?
 4. Discuss the mystery aspect of the plotline. How effective is the author's use of plot twists and red herrings? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened, or did the author keep you guessing until the end of the story? Did you find that the novel held everyone's interest throughout the story, or were there times when it failed to totally engross members of the group?
 5. How important is the setting to the story? Could this story have taken place somewhere else? who would this change thing?
- 



What is the most important part of a mystery or thriller to each member of the group-characterization, action, dialogue, or setting? How does this book rate in each of these areas?


Is the author equally invested in both character and plot? Or did the author put more effort into developing the story than in creating compelling and believable characters? Were the motivations of the characters believable, or did their actions feel like a means to further the plot?

Agatha Christie wrote in her autobiography about her dislike of mysteries having a romantic subplot. Do you agree or disagree with her views? Did this book have an element of romance? If so, do you feel the love aspect enhanced or detracted from the story?

Would you recommend this work to a non mystery/thriller fan simply on the basis of its literary merit? Would you endorse it purely because of the skillful writing and the well-developed characters? Or do you think the work would strictly appeal to fans of the mystery/thriller genre.

Did this book live up to or exceed your expectations of the author?

What did you like or dislike about the book that hasn't been discussed already? Were you glad you read this book? Would you recommend it to a friend? Do you want to read more work by this author?





Who Else Writes Like...?

A readers' guide to fiction authors



DID YOU KNOW?

You can use the library's Reading Recommendation Website "Who Else Writes Like?" to find new books to read!

Who Else Writes Like...? will help you to find something to read by uncovering new authors based on ones you already like.

And there are lots of other ways to search Who Else...?, such as genre, character and series. There are also featured links to book award winners, useful websites and editor's choice of top titles.

Some titles included in the site may be suitable for young adult readers, who are in the process of 'crossing-over' to adult novels.

How to Log In

To use this great resource just visit the Who Else Writes Like Website and Log in with your Library Card. Then select Meath County Libraries from the drop down menu of accounts and click on continue. And you're on your way to finding your next read.

And remember, you can also search our [online catalogue](#) and reserve the titles recommended.

www.meath.ie/council/council-services/libraries/what-to-read-next



About Florence Gillan



Florence Gillan a retired school teacher who has been making up stories for as long as she can remember.

“I first started writing when I was very young, I just loved reading,”

“It was like an addiction, and then I started telling my little sister stories in bed at night and then I started writing them down.”

Originally from Lissadell in County Sligo, Florence left at 17 to become a Religion and History teacher spending most of her career in Louth and settling in Newry.

Decades later and she has now written and published her first book, a mystery thriller called Let Them Lie.

Interview with Florence Gillan

In the book: Aoife O'Driscoll travels home to Sligo for a family gathering to mark the twentieth anniversary of her father's death.

While there, the discovery of a long-buried box and its disturbing contents sends her on a terrifying journey through her family's past.

Chasing secrets, while trying to hold her life together, becomes increasingly difficult. Breaking up with her fiancé Connor at a point when she desperately needs support, she falls deeper into an obsession with finding the truth, knowing that her investigations threaten to shatter the lives of everyone she loves – her mother, her brother Sam, her sister Kate, her young niece and nephew.

She is left to face the question: how high a price is she willing to pay to protect her family and can she live with the consequences?

"It's a crime thriller, but it's not a police procedural, there's no detective or anything," says Florence.

"The protagonist in the story, Aoife, in a sense becomes the detective in her own life and it's about the things she discovers and her deciding what to do with this knowledge.

"There's a dark underbelly to what seems like a perfect family."

Originally from Lissadell in County Sligo, Florence left at 17 to become a Religion and History teacher spending most of her career in Louth and settling in Newry.

"I Worked on the Cooley Peninsula all my adult life. I started off in Dunleer and then in Dundalk at O' Fiaich college and then I transferred to the Bush around 1985 or 1986 and I stayed there pretty much until I retired.


"It's a special place I have to say. It was no hardship to travel down every morning and the views coming down from Omeath and into Carlingford were just lovely.

Florence wrote her first novel 'Tragedies in France' when she was nine years old, spelling the title 'tragically wrong' she jokes.

"I just knew that when I started writing I'd never felt happier either reading or writing, which was so exciting to me and I loved it.

"I read literally everything, from thrillers to classics, every kind of genre you could think of.

"I loved funny books like PG Wodehouse and Tom Sharp and people like that. I was totally addicted to Agatha Christie. Her plots are genius.



In the book “I kind of lost the heart for it when I went to secondary school, because whereas in primary school you have lots of scope for imagination, secondary school is much more about exams and grammar and punctuation and those less exciting things.

“So I lost confidence in my writing for a long time and for many years I was talking myself out of it.

“Somebody had told me once that you had to have a plan when you were writing a book and sure I never knew when I was sitting down what was going to come out and so I just gave up really for a long time.”

Whatever spark Florence had was reignited in her forties when she read a book that suggested getting up early in the morning and writing three pages of what immediately comes into your head.

“So I’d get up early at half five or six and sit in the dark because I didn’t want to wake my husband or get out of bed, and I’d write things like ‘this is so boring, why am I doing this?’, ‘this is a waste of time.’

“But then gradually I found that I started to write out the sort of stuff that goes round in your head every day, your worries, your problems, the things you’re happy about, the things you’re sad about, and I did that every day religiously for about six months and it freed something in me I think and it started getting me to think about writing again.”

Buoyed by her new sources of inspiration, Florence started work on a novel with the initial chapters receiving praise from publishers who wanted to see the rest.

“I finished it off before it was ready and ultimately they rejected it,” Florence says.

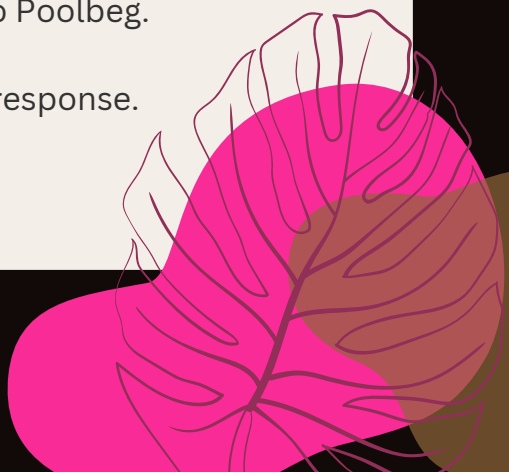
“But it was a huge boost to my ego, and it gave me some encouragement because I thought it can’t have been terrible if they wanted to see all of it.


Parking her writing for a time, she came back to it during Covid focusing on an idea for a story that had been in her head for sometime.

“During Covid, I sat down and it just came. I bullied a few friends and family into reading it and they didn’t think it was awful, which I found encouraging.

“After some redrafting and taking some constructive criticism, which is not easy for a teacher, I decided to send it off to Poolbeg.

After a three month wait, she got her response.





“I got an email saying they were interested and wanted to see the rest but didn’t get too excited because I’d been there before.”

She needn’t have worried, however, because the publishers came back saying they loved it and offering a three book deal.

“I know it sounds corny, but it really was like a dream come true. I had wanted to do this my whole life and here I was at 61, and I’ve heard I was going to get this amazing thing I wanted all my life, and I was nearly afraid to believe it. It was mind blowing.

Florence’s success surely has something to do with her dedicated writing schedule.

“I’m definitely not one of these people that writes at night, I might think about stuff to do with the book at night but I start around 9 o’clock in the morning work for an hour and a half or two hours take a break for a couple of hours and then go back and stop at around 7 o’clock.

“If I’m stuck on something, I’ll take a notepad or my phone to bed so that if I wake up and think of something I can write it down and hope it makes sense in the morning, which sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes you wonder what in the name of God were you dreaming about, she laughs.

“I think you use everything around you when you write a book, even hearing scraps of conversation. You think ‘oh my God that line was brilliant,’ you get inspiration from everywhere.

“I love the actual writing. It’s the drafting and redrafting that’s the hard work and having to listen to people critiquing it can be challenging.

But I have to say my kids have been fantastic with things like the language used by young characters, and it is mainly young characters in the novel.


“They would say to me ‘look, that doesn’t read like how a young person would put that.’

“So a few times they’ve directed me and I’ve changed some of the language around things like slang.

“But having people willing to read and critique is something I’ve found so helpful. Sometimes you fall in love with an idea and you need someone to say you’re talking too fancy there and you’re going to alienate anyone who reads it.”

As for her next book, Florence has already been busy working away.

“They’re interested in having another out this time next year and I have a rough, rough draft of a second one done and I’m hoping they’ll like it and if they do, it’s a matter of making it better and doing some drafting.”



BEGINNER'S PLUCK

Florence Gillan

As a child, reading a book a day, Florence was terrified she would run out of books.

"It was such a relief when I first went to the library," she says, "and realised that I never would."

The second youngest of seven, brought up on a farm, Florence helped out her father. But she also made up and wrote stories.

"I thought I'd be a writer until I went to secondary school," she says. "But [it] killed my imagination. I read instead of listening in class."

Florence ended up in teaching, initially in Dunleer and Dundalk, before moving to Bush Post-Primary School on the Cooley Peninsula. Eventually, she became the home-school community liaison coordinator.

"I loved that," she says.

For years Florence didn't write. Then, inspired by *The Artist's Way*, she wrote morning pages, and something opened in her. She

wrote a novel but parked it. And it wasn't until lockdown that she tried again.

"I'd retired and just sat down for a few months and wrote a rough draft. The plot happened haphazardly."

Having shared the draft with family and friends, she redrafted the novel, and sent it to Poolbeg. And in February this year she was offered a three-book deal.

"I floated to a happy place," she says. "Dreams do happen."

Who is Florence Gillan?

Date/place of birth: 1960/ Sligo.

Education: Ursuline Convent in Sligo; Mater Dei Institute of Education, History and Religion.

Home: Newry. "I go to my holiday home in Sligo as much as I can."

Family: Husband Eugene Hanna, adult children, Rachel, David, Mark, and Sarah. Dogs, Honey and Rua, and a cat with

no name.

The day job: Full-time writer.
In another life: "I'd have loved to have been an actor."

Favourite writers: PG Wodehouse; Jane Austen; John Steinbeck; Agatha Christie; PD James; John McGahern, and Anthony Trollope.

Second book: "I've written a rough draft."

Top tip: Don't procrastinate. "I wasted so many years talking myself out of writing."

Instagram: @Florence.gillan

The debut

Let Them Lie;
Poolbeg Crimson, €16.99/
Kindle, €2.29.

When Aoife O'Driscoll makes a terrifying discovery about her late father, she can't let the matter lie, but will the truth destroy all she holds dear?

The verdict: A dark, compulsive page turner.



SUE LEONARD