

FOR LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS AND READING GROUPS

# The Story Circle: one night, four steps

A free guide to reading the Advent books by Kenneth McDonald together, one chapter or one story a night, in twenty to forty minutes.

## READ

10 TO 30 MINUTES

One reader reads tonight's chapter or story aloud, or the group reads it in turns. Each night gives the time it takes, aloud and silently.

## TALK

5 TO 10 MINUTES

The group takes the one question printed after the night's reading. Everyone answers once before anyone answers twice.

## WRITE

3 MINUTES

Each reader writes one line in a notebook of their own, from the prompt in the box. In the mysteries, they also write down a suspect or a guess.

## SHARE

BEFORE THE NEXT SESSION

One small thing to do or say: read a line to someone at home, ask an older relative a question, light a window.

### RUNNING A SESSION

- Keep to the date. Each chapter happens on the night at its head, so the group reads it on that night or the nearest meeting day.
- Read the note before each anthology story first. It says who wrote the story, when, and what to listen for, and never gives the ending away.
- Stop at the box. The box called Tonight's four, printed after every night, holds the question, the writing prompt and the thing to share.
- Keep the notebooks. In the two Coldkeld mysteries the reader keeps a notebook as the detective does, and by the last night it holds the answer.

### WHO THE BOOKS SUIT

- **The Coldkeld mysteries** suit readers from about 11, and families reading aloud. A man dies in the first book; the story tells how without dwelling on it.
- **The two anthologies** suit readers from about 12. Some of the old stories are frightening, and some carry the attitudes of their time towards a people, a class or women. The note before the story says so plainly.
- The tick page called My Advent shelf, near the front of each book, lets each reader keep count of the four steps across the month.



## The Twenty-Fourth Window

COLDKELD MYSTERY 1 · 24 NIGHTS, 1 TO 24 DECEMBER

A Yorkshire Dales village uncovers one dressed window each evening, and on the fourth night the man who chairs the windows dies. A retired court reporter writes down what everyone says. Every clue is on the page before she uses it.



## The Twelfth Night Visitor

COLDKELD MYSTERY 2 · 12 NIGHTS, 25 DECEMBER TO 5 JANUARY

The morning after the first book ends, a stranger arrives in the same village with a soft holdall and a flat case. A shorter book of twelve nights, for the Twelve Days of Christmas. Read the first book first.



## Twenty-Four Ghosts (Annotated)

24 CLASSIC GHOST STORIES, 1 TO 24 DECEMBER

From Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell to M. R. James and Edith Wharton, written in English between 1837 and 1913, with a note before each story, a note after it, a glossary and Tonight's four.



## Twenty-Four Cases (Annotated)

24 CLASSIC STORIES OF CRIME AND DETECTION

Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, G. K. Chesterton, Baroness Orczy and more, written between 1844 and 1913. Not every night has a detective: some follow a vagrant, a juror or a thief.

**A sample first night, The Twenty-Fourth Window, 1 December.** Read: about six minutes aloud. Talk: Len Garside says his window is always the last. What did you notice about him before anything happened? Write: start a notebook of your own, and write down one thing somebody said to you today, word for word, with the time. Share: put a light in one window of your home tonight.

**For a school term that ends before Christmas,** read two nights a session, or begin the anthologies in November and keep the dates as a countdown.