

GRAHAM
BARTLETT / AUTHOR
+ POLICE
ADVISOR

CREATING CREDIBLE CRIME FICTION

PRO-WRITING AID CRIME WRITERS' WEEK
21ST JUNE 2024

GRAHAM BARTLETT
AUTHOR AND POLICE & CRIME ADVISOR



WHY ME?

- RETIRED SENIOR DETECTIVE
- BEST SELLING CRIME WRITER – FICTION AND NON FICTION
- ADVISOR TO AROUND 150 AUTHORS AND TV WRITERS. PETER JAMES, MARK BILLINGHAM, ELLY GRIFFITHS, ANTHONY HOROWITZ
- CRIME WRITING TUTOR WITH PWA AND UNIVERSITIES

TLAS AND OTHER LOBS



PRINCIPLES OF PROCEDURAL ADVICE

- THE STORY IS ALWAYS KING
- IT MUST BE CREDIBLE
- CHARACTERS MUST BE PLAUSIBLE
- NO-ONE WANTS 'I SPY OF POLICING'
- UNDERSTANDING AIDS POETIC LICENCE
- IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE & THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY AROUND THINGS

GOOD THRILLER WRITING

- MAKES THE TEDIOUS DRAMATIC
- FINDS HUMANITY IN PROCEDURE
- IS AUTHENTIC WITHOUT BEING PEDANTIC
- SHOWS THE TIP OF THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

TURNING RESEARCH INTO DRAMA

- MOST PROCEDURE IS MIND-NUMBINGLY BORING
- IDENTIFY THE POINT OF CHANGE. EXPAND INTO THAT
- IN LATE, OUT EARLY
- CRUNCH TIME DOWN
- SHOW, DON'T TELL

GRAHAM
BARTLETT / AUTHOR
+ POLICE
ADVISOR

SHOW, DON'T TELL

– HAPPY VALLEY S1 EP1



MY MANTRA

GRAHAM
BARTLETT / AUTHOR
+ POLICE
ADVISOR

- EVERY WORD IN
- EVERY LINE IN
- EVERY PARAGRAPH IN
- EVERY SCENE IN
- EVERY CHAPTER
- HAS TO EARN ITS PLACE ON THE PAGE*

*GOES FOR CHARACTERS TOO

TIP OF THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

- HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO PUT IN AND WHAT TO LEAVE OUT?
- GO THROUGH YOUR MANUSCRIPT WITH A HIGHLIGHTER AND STRIKE THROUGH ONLY THE WORDS THAT HOLD THE PLOT TOGETHER
- EFFECT ON CHARACTERS
- FRESH EYEBALLS

FIREARMS SCENES – ROLE OF PROTAGONIST

- ARMED OFFICER?
- IN COMMAND?
- AT THE SCENE?
- LISTENING TO DRAMA?
- WATCHING THE DRAMA
- CHANGING INTELLIGENCE?

ARRESTS

- ID OF SUSPECT
- LOCATE SUSPECT
- ARREST SUSPECT
- TRANSPORT SUSPECT
- DETENTION AUTHORISED
- PROCESSING
- DNA, PHOTOGRAPH, FINGERPRINTS
- FORENSIC RETRIEVAL
- WAITING IN CELL
- SOLICITOR ARRIVES
- SOLICITOR BRIEFED
- SOLICITOR WITH SUSPECT
- INTERVIEW

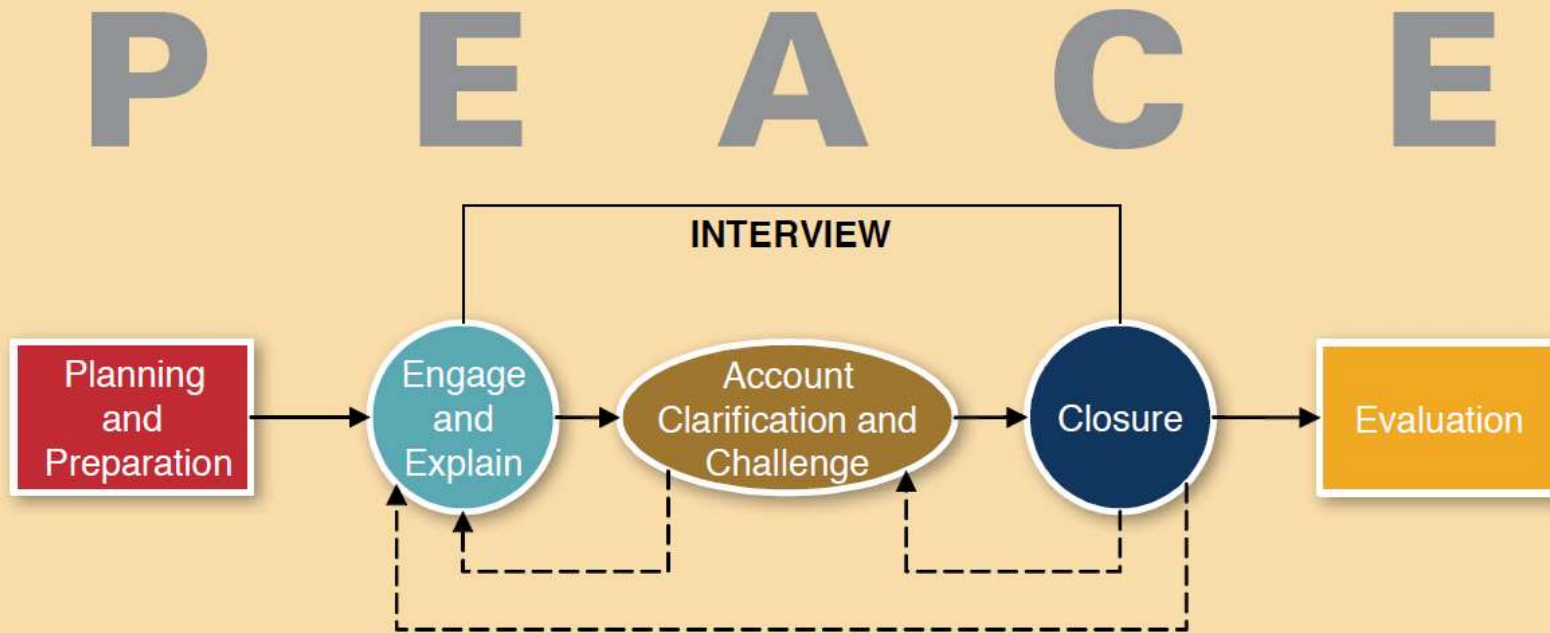
ARRESTS

- ~~• ID OF SUSPECT~~
- LOCATE SUSPECT
- ARREST SUSPECT
- ~~• TRANSPORT SUSPECT~~
- ~~• DETENTION AUTHORISED~~
- ~~• PROCESSING~~
- ~~• DNA, PHOTOGRAPH, FINGERPRINTS~~
- ~~• FORENSIC RETRIEVAL~~
- WAITING IN CELL
- ~~• SOLICITOR ARRIVES~~
- ~~• SOLICITOR BRIEFED~~
- ~~• SOLICITOR WITH SUSPECT~~
- INTERVIEW

BUT – REFLECT PASSAGE OF TIME

INTERVIEWS

Figure 1: PEACE interviewing model



GRAHAM
BARTLETT / AUTHOR
+ POLICE
ADVISOR

NADINE MATHESON – THE JIGSAW MAN

HOW IT IS V HOW TO WRITE IT

RELATABLE CHARACTERS

- PROCEDURE IS ALIEN TO MOST – IDENTIFY THE HUMAN ASPECTS TO MAKE YOUR PROTAGONIST RELATABLE.
- ARE THEY BORED/ SCARED/ IMPATIENT/ FRUSTRATED?
- WHAT HURTS? THEIR FEET, FROM RUNNING? THEIR EYEBALLS, FROM SCREEN WORK?
- WHAT DO THEY NEED? A WEE? A GLASS OF WINE? THEIR MUM?
- WHAT ARE THEY REALLY THINKING?

GRAHAM
BARTLETT / AUTHOR
+ POLICE
ADVISOR

INSIDE THE MIND

– HAPPY VALLEY S3 EP1



AND FINALLY!!!

GRAHAM
BARTLETT / AUTHOR
+ POLICE
ADVISOR

- EVERY WORD IN
- EVERY LINE IN
- EVERY PARAGRAPH IN
- EVERY SCENE IN
- EVERY CHAPTER
- HAS TO EARN ITS PLACE ON THE PAGE*

*GOES FOR CHARACTERS TOO

QUESTIONS?

GRAHAM
BARTLETT / AUTHOR
+ POLICE
ADVISOR

Email: graham.bartlett@policeadvisor.co.uk

<https://linktr.ee/grahambartlett>

+44 (0)7768 554831

