



May 09, 2014 00:00 BST

School pupils test their crime stories on University experts

To celebrate the launch of a brand new crime-writing festival, students from Newcastle's Heaton Manor School paid a visit to Northumbria University to test their very own crime fiction stories on a panel of experts.

Crime Story is a two-day festival taking place at Northumbria University as part of a collaboration with New Writing North.

The festival has been created to allow established and aspiring crime writers to delve into the facts behind the fiction – with expert guidance from the

University's criminology, law, forensics and digital forensics academics.

The festival, which takes place on 31 May and 1 June, will base its workshops and panel discussions on a crime scenario written by acclaimed author Ann Cleeves (Shetland, Vera).

And now, Northumbria academics have offered to share their expertise with Media Studies students from Heaton Manor School.

Christine Bell, Subject Leader for Media Studies at Heaton Manor, said: "Our GCSE and A Level students have spent many months investigating crime fiction, studying programmes such as Vera and CSI to identify how suspense is built, and how stylistic approaches to crime fiction vary.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for them to also look at the facts behind the fiction - something that all writers must consider to create a credible piece of work. Having direct access to criminologists and forensics experts is invaluable; it will add another dimension to our students' work, while also allowing them to gain a glimpse into the type of research that is available to students within higher education."

During their afternoon on campus, the students presented their crime fiction ideas, based on Ann Cleeves' Crime Story scenario, to an expert panel represented by Northumbria's Dr Louise Ridley (Senior Lecturer, Criminology), Charlotte Bilby (Senior Lecturer, Criminology), Dr Christopher Laing (Teaching Fellow, Digital Forensics), Steve Chambers (crime writer and Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing) and Ray Palmer (Senior Lecturer – Forensic Science).

They also got a behind the scenes glimpse into the TV world, thanks to Northumbria Performing Arts graduate, Riley Jones, who has graced the small screen as DC Mark Edwards in Vera.

The students then enjoyed a tour of Northumbria's media facilities, giving them a taste of what's to come if they were to continue their media studies into higher education.

Anybody wishing to find out more about the different courses on offer at Northumbria University can sign up for its open days on 27 and 28 June by visiting www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday.

For more information about Crime Story, which takes place on 31 May and 1 June, and to book tickets, visit www.crimestory.co.uk

For further details about Heaton Manor School, visit www.heatonmanor.net

Date posted: May 9, 2014

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focussed, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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