

THE AGATHA CHRISTIE READING GROUP GUIDE

“Agatha Christie is a brilliant literary conjuror. She places her characters face downwards like playing cards, shuffles them with cunning hands, and time after time we point to the wrong card. She has intrigued, thrilled, and baffled readers for nearly ninety years and the magic is as potent as ever.”
—P.D. James

Agatha Christie is the bestselling mystery novelist of all time.

Beginning in 1920 with the publication of the stunning *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Christie set new standards for mystery writers. Cleverly plotted, with casts of characters drawn with an impeccable eye and a shrewd understanding of human nature, her novels gave the world two of the most enduring characters in detective fiction: Hercule Poirot, the eccentric, obsessively tidy Belgian detective who relies on his “little gray cells” to work out the complexities of a crime, and Miss Jane Marple, the elderly spinster in the quaint English village of St. Mary Mead, who knows a great deal about what drives people to commit crimes.

In this reading group guide, created especially to accompany Black Dog & Leventhal’s hardcover editions of the novels, you’ll find questions and discussion topics designed to enhance your exploration of some of Christie’s best-loved novels. Whether you are reading Christie for the first time, re-visiting novels you read long ago, or deepening your acquaintance with the remarkable detectives you’ve encountered in the popular movies and television series based on Christie’s books, you’ll soon discover why Christie remains the “Queen of Crime” to millions of fans.

The Mysterious Affair at Styles (1920)

1. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* is set in a country manor in England during World War I. In what ways are both time and place central to the novel?
2. In creating the voice of a narrator/assistant, Christie echoes the techniques used by Arthur Conan Doyle in his classic Sherlock Holmes mysteries. How does the partnership of Hastings and Poirot differ from the famous crime-solving team of Watson and Holmes? What other literary traditions does Christie draw on in the novel? For example, what does it share with nineteenth-century novels of manners?
3. Almost all of the principle characters fall under suspicion in the course of the novel. Does Hastings make assumptions based on his own prejudices or do the characters' actions provide viable motives in every case? Does the reader see things that Hastings doesn't?
4. To what extent do social conventions determine the behavior of the characters? How do the relationships among them, either acknowledged or hidden, add to the tensions and the complications of the plot?
5. Poirot chides Hastings for his failure to use both deduction and instinct to make sense of the clues (p. 123). How does Poirot's final explanation (pp. 185-196) illuminate the importance of both factors in solving the mystery?

The Murder of Roger Ackroyd (1925)

1. How does the use of Dr. Sheppard as narrator affect your expectations of his role in the novel? In what ways do his manner—and his profession—contribute to his believability as a reliable, objective reporter?
2. How does Christie establish Sheppard's personality in the first few pages of the book? What do you learn about him from his conversation with his sister Caroline (pp. 3-5), his description of village history and village gossip (pp. 6-9), and his first encounter with Hercule Poirot (pp. 17-20)? Is his behavior during his meeting with Roger Ackroyd (pp. 35-37) consistent with your first impressions of him?
3. As the novel unfolds, several people emerge as “likely suspects,” including Ackroyd's sister-in-law, Mrs. Cecil Ackroyd; her daughter Flora; Major Blunt, the big-game hunter; Geoffrey Raymond, Ackroyd's personal secretary; Ralph Paton, Ackroyd's stepson; the butler, Parker; and Ursula Bourne, the maid who resigned the afternoon of the murder. Which of these characters most fully aroused your own suspicions and why?
4. How does the character of Poirot evolve during the course novel? In addition to the narrator's point of view, what shapes the reader's impressions of him? In what ways do Poirot's behavior, suggestions, and opinions create a subtle “parallel” narrative to Sheppard's account?
5. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* ends with perhaps the most famous “surprising twist” in mystery fiction. Are there scenes in which Sheppard (or Christie) intentionally misleads the reader? Are there, on the other hand, hints about the solution buried throughout the book?

The Mystery of the Blue Train (1928)

1. How does Christie create an immediate sense of mystery and intrigue? Discuss how the descriptions of people and locations in the opening chapters conjure up a strong, almost cinematic, atmosphere.
2. “From childhood upward Ruth Van Aldin had been accustomed to having her own way, and anyone who had ever stood up against her soon realized that Rufus Van Aldin’s daughter never gave in” [p.29]. How does Ruth’s marriage to Derek Kettering fit into this description of her? Are there aspects of her upbringing, as well as her current situation, which evoke your sympathy?
3. “Katherine Grey was thirty-three. She came of good family, but her father had lost all of his money...She was a quiet woman...with a kind of happy serenity nothing could shake. Moreover she had been born with, and still possessed, a sense of humor” [p. 59]. Is Katherine a familiar literary character? In what ways is she similar to the heroines of other novels you have read? Does this play a part in the way you react to her and her role in the novel?
4. A reasonable but false solution to the murder is presented midway through the book [p. 139-140]. What purpose does it serve? Does it offer information that helps the reader reach the correct solution? Is the presentation of an incorrect solution a common device in mystery stories?
5. In talking to Katherine about Derek Kettering and Major Knighton, Poirot says, “A good man may be ruined by his love for a bad woman—but the other way holds good also. A bad man may equally be ruined by his love for a good woman” [p. 226]. Is it immediately apparent to the reader to which characters Poirot is referring? Did this conversation change your suspicions about the identity of the murderer?

The Tuesday Club Murders (1928)

1. Raymond West's question—"what class of brain really succeeds best in unraveling a mystery?"—elicits various responses from the group [pp. 3-4]. Discuss how their professions, experience, gender, and personalities influence their individual answers. Which response best reflects your own opinion? Are there skills they overlook?
2. In giving her perspective on crime, Miss Marple says, "many people seem to me not to be either bad or good, but simply, you know, very silly" [p. 3]. In the stories that follow, is this point of view usually proven correct?
3. To what extent do the storytellers' preconceived notions cause them to misinterpret the "facts" surrounding a crime? In which cases do the listeners have an advantage in putting together the puzzles—either because they notice small but important clues, or because they take a more objective point of view?
4. What is most satisfying about a mystery presented in the short-story form? Did you find the stories as intriguing and as involving as Christie's novels?
5. Which of the stories is your favorite and why?

Murder at the Vicarage (1930)

1. *Murder at the Vicarage* introduces Miss Marple and the quiet village of St. Mary Mead. Why do you think Christie chose to use a clergyman as the narrator? In what ways is the voice of an “insider” more effective than an omniscient, authorial voice would be?
2. What does the conversation at the tea party (p. 10-15) reveal about Miss Marple’s personality? How do her tone and observations set her apart from other women? What adjectives, both positive and negative, would you use to describe her manner?
3. Discuss the relationships between Miss Marple and the police. What assumptions (or prejudices) underlie their interactions? Do their conflicts reflect a natural antipathy between amateur and professional or do they stem from the personalities of Miss Marple, Colonel Melchett, and Inspector Slack?
4. *Murder at the Vicarage* is at once a mystery story and an entertaining portrait of life in an isolated English village. How successfully does Christie integrate the two different genres? Talk about such elements as the use of humor and satire, as well as the inclusions of detailed scenes of everyday life, descriptions of the police procedures, and the concise, deftly rendered portraits of various secondary characters.
5. If you are familiar with Miss Marple from the television series and movies based on the books, in what ways does Christie’s original portrait of her differ from the way she has been presented on screen (both large and small)?

Murder on the Orient Express (1934)

1. The fellow travelers in *Murder on the Orient Express* represent a wide range of nationalities, classes, and personalities. To what extent is the cast of characters representative of a particular time and place? Does it also reflect human society in a more general, universal sense? If so, how does Christie achieve this?
2. How does the unusual setting of *Murder on the Orient Express* shape the structure of Poirot's investigation? What advantages does it give him? What challenges does it present that makes it more complicated than other cases with which he has been involved?
3. Poirot recounts what he knows about each of the passengers (pp. 184-187) and makes a list of "things needing explanation" (p. 189-90). In addition to clarifying the facts, what other purpose do these summaries serve? What do they reveal about Poirot's methods? What elements of his personality—good and bad—come into focus in his discussions with M. Bouc and Dr. Constantine?
4. Discuss the individual interviews Poirot conducts with the passengers. Does his approach differ according to the class, gender, background, or profession of the interviewees? As you accumulate information about circumstances surrounding the crime and learn more about the identities of the passengers, which characters emerge as the most likely suspects?
5. In writing *Murder on the Orient Express*, Christie was clearly inspired by the most sensational crime of the period—the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's son on March 1, 1932 and the discovery of his body ten weeks later. Does the connection to this famous, real-life tragedy enhance the power of the novel? What can a fictionalized version of a crime provide that contemporaneous reporting or historical accounts cannot? Is Christie's "resolution" more satisfying than what actually occurred in the Lindbergh case?

The A.B.C. Murders (1935)

1. The narrative voice in *The A.B.C. Murders* alternates between first and third person. What does this add to the reading experience? Does it increase the tension? Involve the reader more thoroughly in the investigation? Give the reader an “upper hand”?
2. In the 1930s the practice of psychiatry was just beginning to make an impact on society, and Christie brings in Dr. Thompson, a famous alienist, to help the police in their investigation by offering psychological insight into the killer (p. 51, p. 55, pp. 81-83, for example). Based on what you know about human psychology and behavior, do the doctor’s assumptions and opinions appear to be valid? Does his participation influence Poirot’s approach to the case?
3. Poirot and Hastings discuss the differences between their previous cases, where they investigated “private murders,” and the “cold-blooded, impersonal murder” they are facing in this case (p. 90-91). What does this conversation reveal about Poirot’s style and strengths as a detective? What factors in particular undermine Poirot’s abilities to resolve the discrepancies in this case?
4. Are the depictions of the “interested parties” (Mrs. Asher’s niece, Elizabeth Barnard’s sister and boy-friend, and Carmichael Clarke’s secretary and brother) realistic? Are their actions and reactions natural and credible under the circumstances?
5. What similarities are there between *The A.B.C. Murders* and present-day crime stories, either real or fictional, you are familiar with? What aspects of the case and the way it is handled are particularly, perhaps surprisingly, contemporary?

Murder in Mesopotamia (1936)

1. Dr. Reilly chooses Amy Leatheran to recount the circumstances surrounding the death of Louise Leidner because, “She has a professional character of the highest...and was an observant and intelligent eye-witness” [pp.1-2]. What other attributes and talents does Leatheran bring to her role as narrator?
2. How does Christie paint such a clear and memorable picture of the archaeological expedition? Discuss the details that make the physical setting come to life, establish a palpable sense of the importance of the work being done, and illuminate the passions of the people involved. What insights does she provide into both the positive and negative sides of European incursions into the Middle East?
3. The portrait of Louise Leidner emerges through the voices many different people [see pp. 43, 46, 56, 56-57, 142-3, 147-8, for some examples]. How are each of these people influenced by their relationship to her and her husband, as well as by their own secrets, ambitions, desires, and fears? Which witnesses did you find most reliable? Drawing on these opinions and your own impressions, give a character sketch of Louise Leidner. How accurate is Poirot’s final assessment [p. 225-7]?
4. *Murder in Mesopotamia* is a “locked-room” mystery, a classic format. Is the method of murder credible? What flaws can you see in the murder’s highly imaginative plan?
5. By his own admission, Poirot has no material proof to support his solution of the murder [p. 225]. Do you think material evidence is essential to proving a crime, or is Poirot’s logical approach (an echo of Sherlock Holmes’ well-known style) the only way to solve certain crimes? Can you think of any real-life situations to support your position?

Death on the Nile (1937)

1. *Death on the Nile* is one of Christie's longest novels and features a large cast of characters. Do the many secondary characters and their interactions enhance the novel or are they intrusive or distracting? Other than the murder mystery, which plot lines in particular engaged your attention or interest? Discuss, for example, Christie's portrayal of the relationships between parents and children (the Allertons and the Otterbournes), as well as the flirtations and other romantic encounters the book explores.
2. Jackie describes Linnet as "the Girl Who Has Everything" [p. 23] and declares that Simon "wouldn't ever have fallen in love with her if she hadn't made him" [p. 85]. Do Jackie's perceptions of Linnet and Simon serve as the only point of view the reader has, or does Christie provide "independent" information and insights for the reader? Are there reasons to mistrust or at least question Jackie's representation of Linnet's and Simon's romance and marriage?
3. *Death on the Nile* is part of a trilogy of novels that feature Hercule Poirot's travels in the Middle East. (*Appointment with Death* is set in Jerusalem and *Murder in Mesopotamia* is set in Iraq). How important is the setting to *Death on the Nile*? How do the realities of travel and tourism shape the plot? Does the gathering of strangers produce more interesting possibilities for Poirot's investigation than the family groups featured in other Christie books?
4. In the end, Poirot solves three different mysteries: he identifies the spy Colonel Race has been looking for; figures out the theft of Linnet's necklace; and, of course, reveals the intricate plot behind Linnet's death and the two other murders it led to. In what ways do the other, less central, crimes affect Poirot's thinking and methods? Did they influence your own attempts to solve the crime?
5. Is *Death on the Nile* more than a cleverly plotted mystery? In what ways does it play on your emotions as well as your curiosity? Discuss the impact of family loyalty, romantic passion, envy, greed, and other emotions on the actions and reactions of the characters. Does Christie provide satisfying punishments and rewards for the various characters?

Appointment with Death (1938)

1. How seriously do you take Raymond and Carol when they talk about killing their stepmother [p. 4-7]? Do you think that either one is capable of planning and carrying out a murder? Are their reasons—and rationalizations—for committing the crime persuasive, or do they reflect the thoughts and fantasies of two people who, as Carol puts it, are “all queer and warped and wrong” [p. 7]?
2. Sarah King and Dr. Theodore Gerard, both trained psychologists, make a series of assertions about the Boynton family as they watch them in the hotel lobby [pp. 14- 23]. Does Christie’s depiction of the ease with which they create a complete psychological portrait of the family ring true? In what ways does her portrayal of a psychologist’s skills and expertise reflect the period in which the book was written? Does it seem naïve or simplistic to the contemporary reader? If so, why do you think that’s the case?
3. Did you find Christie’s evocation of the exotic setting of *Appointment with Death* compelling? Are the historical details, descriptions of the landscape, and observations about the people and the customs well integrated into the narrative? Are there political undertones that you found interesting? Disturbing?
4. Which members of the Boynton family are the most sympathetic? Is their submission to the malicious Mrs. Boynton adequately explored and explained in the course of the novel? Is Mrs. Boynton presented purely as a figure of evil, or does she have qualities that arouse your sympathy or compassion?
5. After the victim dies, the Boynton family gives contradictory accounts about their own whereabouts, who they were with, the time certain things happened, and other “facts.” What motivates them to alter the truth? What does the death and, especially, the aftermath, bring to light about the family dynamics, as well as about the emotional strengths (or weaknesses) of the individual family members?

Sad Cypress (1940)

1. The structure of *Sad Cypress* differs from Christie's conventional style. How does the division of the narrative into three distinctive parts (the story of the crime and the circumstances surrounding it, seen mostly through Elinor's eyes; Poirot's observations and conclusions as an investigator; and the final trial scene) affect the flow of the novel?
2. What adjectives best define Elinor and Mary? Which of the two women do you find more appealing? Do you identify more strongly with one or the other? Does Elinor's apparent indifference to her own fate (as seen in the prologue) influence your opinion of her? Are the reasons for her attitude clear from the beginning, or do they only emerge in the book's final pages?
3. Is the portrait of Roderick as complete as those of the women? Is his infatuation with Mary understandable? In what ways does the nature of his relationship with Elinor explain—and perhaps excuse—his behavior? What qualities do you admire in him? What aspects of his personality, if any, caused you to dislike or distrust him?
4. How does the trial scene at the conclusion of *Sad Cypress* compare to the more informal denouements of other Poirot mysteries? Does the strict structure of the trial increase the suspense and add impact to the unpredictable, but impeccably reasoned conclusions Poirot presents? Is the trial itself as gripping as those presented in contemporary legal mysteries by writers like John Grisham and Scott Turow?
5. Peter Lord is one of many doctors featured in Christie's novels. Is his professional expertise integral to solving the crimes or does it serve as a counterpoint to Poirot's idiosyncratic approach to the "obvious" evidence surrounding a crime? In what way does he represent the personal, subjective factors (or "gut feelings") that play a role in getting to the bottom of any crime? Are there other characters who perform a similar function, whether by pointing out important clues or by intentionally misdirecting the investigation?

Evil Under the Sun (1941)

1. Poirot contends that vacation spots are an ideal place to commit a crime (p. 9). What makes his reasoning persuasive? What flaws do you see in it? Do the events in the book support his notion?
2. Poirot declares “There is no such thing as a plain fact of murder. Murder springs nine times out of ten from the character and circumstances of the murdered person” (p. 66). What does the reader know about Arlena before the murder? Discuss the differing perceptions of her among the hotel guests—as well as her perceptions of herself (p. 25, for example)—and what they reveal about her character and her circumstances.
3. Compare the approaches taken by Poirot and the police during the interviews with the hotel guests (Chapter Six). What specific things does Poirot focus on, in contrast to the police? What do his questions establish not only about the facts of the case, but about the interests, personalities, and motives of each possible suspect?
4. How do the interactions among the characters change during the investigation? Do they clarify or complicate the reader’s understanding of the crime and its possible solution?
5. In the beginning of the novel, Poirot says, “evil does walk the earth and can be recognized as such” (p. 10). Is the belief in the reality of evil foolish or illogical or does it provide a reasonable way of explaining otherwise inexplicable crimes or events? To what extent does it provide the key to solving the murder in *Evil Under the Sun*?

The Body in the Library (1942)

1. How do the opening scenes set the tone for the rest of the novel? What do the reactions of Colonel and Mrs. Bantry to finding the body, the conversations between Mrs. Bantry and Miss Marple, and chief constable Melchett's interview with Colonel Bantry establish about the people and everyday life in St. Mary Mead?
2. What are your initial impressions of Miss Marple? How important are her own statements and observations in conveying her character and style? What role do the reactions of other people play?
3. There are many references throughout the book to class differences. How do these color the investigation? In what ways are the police and Miss Marple herself influenced by their own backgrounds and social positions? What other biases are expressed in the novel? Do they simply help to create a sense of the period or do they offer significant clues into the characters and the values that shape their behavior?
4. Miss Marple and the other women in the village are perceived as gossips, sometimes in a kindly way and other times with annoyance and impatience. How does Christie use this perception to further the plot?
5. To what extent does Miss Marple's reliance on "specialized knowledge" (p. 103) explain her success at solving this crime? What techniques—both mental and practical—does she employ?

The Moving Finger (1943)

1. Why is the use of anonymous letters a popular device in mystery stories? What emotions do they bring out not just in the recipients but also in the readers?
2. Jerry Burton and his sister Joanna are newcomers to the village of Lymstock. What advantages does this give Jerry as narrator? How would you characterize the tone of his observations and comments about the villagers? Discuss, for example, his short and snappy descriptions of the visitors who call on him and Joanna when they first arrive [p. 3], his initial reaction to Megan [p. 13], and his assessment of vicar Calthrop and his wife [p. 37].
3. Christie presents various interpretations of and solutions to the crimes through the comments of a large cast of characters. What aspects of the crime do the men tend to focus on? Do the women bring a different point of view? Does Christie give more weight to one perspective or the other?
4. What role does casual, everyday gossip play in moving the plot along and directing the characters'—and the reader's—suspicions?
5. Miss Marple doesn't appear until quite late in the novel [p. 153]. How does her approach to the situation differ from the official investigation and the amateur speculations made by other characters? What adjectives best describe her style and her contribution?

A Murder Is Announced (1950)

1. Is the anonymous announcement in the local newspaper that sets the plot in motion credible or does it seem like a gimmick?
2. Sir Henry Clithering calls Miss Marple “...the finest detective God ever made. Natural genius cultivated in a suitable soil” (p. 31). In this, and the other Miss Marple novels, which factor—her native intelligence or her intimate knowledge of her community—plays a greater role? Would she succeed as a detective in another setting?
3. *A Murder Is Announced* is set in the post-World War II period. How does the novel reflect the lingering repercussions the war? Discuss the undercurrents that inform Christie’s portrayal of Mitzi (p. 48, p. 83, p. 94) and of Rudi Scherz (p. 61), for example, as well as the significance of Miss Marple’s reminiscences about the pre-war period and Inspector Craddock’s reaction to them (p. 96).
4. At the end of the novel, it is revealed that several characters are not who they seemed to be. How does Christie make these masquerades believable, both to the other characters and to the reader? Mistaken identity has a long tradition as a literary device. What other literary device—including familiar character-types—does Christie make use of?
5. When revealing the villain, Miss Marple says, “Weak and kindly people are often very treacherous. And if they’ve got a grudge against life it saps the little moral strength they may possess.” Do you agree with this statement? Can you give examples, either from literature or from real life, to support it?

4:50 From Paddington (1957)

1. What aspects of Lucy's personality make her ideal for the job Miss Marple asks her to undertake? Do you see similarities between the two women and the way they view and interact with other people?
2. Give a quick character sketch of the members of the Crackenthorpe family (Luther, Emma, Harold, Cedric, Alfred, and Bryan Eastley). To what extent are they "stock" characters (the crotchety old man, the put-upon daughter, etc.) found in many English novels, as well as other books by Christie? How does Christie transform them from stereotypes into distinct individuals? Does their behavior and reactions during the police interrogations [pp. 73-84] as well as the private interchanges among them, change your initial impressions of them?
3. The identification of the body is the crux of the mystery. In what ways does Craddock's list of the various possibilities [p. 138] set the stage for the eventual untangling of the case? What, for example, is the import of his conclusion that "You couldn't get far with a case without knowing the motive"?
4. Are there sufficient clues throughout the novel to lead the reader toward the murderer? Did you pick them up as you read the book, or only become aware of their importance once the case was solved?
5. When *4:50 From Paddington* was first published, critics praised the introduction of Lucy Eyelesbarrow as a sidekick to Miss Marple. In addition her role as Miss Marple's eyes, ears, and legs, what does Lucy's presence contribute to the novel? Do you think that Christie should have featured Lucy in subsequent books? Discuss the recurring sidekick (for example, Archie Goodwin in the Nero Wolfe mystery novels, Hawk in the Spenser mysteries by Robert B. Parker) and what they add to these popular series.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIE AND HER BOOKS

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Does Christie's writing style change over the course of time? Discuss the differences, if any, in the way the plots unfold and information is revealed; the intricacies of both the crimes and the solutions; and the scope and depth of her portraits of society and of human nature. Citing specific books or scenes, would you say that Christie improved or declined as a writer?
2. Do Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple grow as characters? If you read the novels in the order in which they were written, do you learn more about them and their ways of thinking? Does your opinion of them change? Does Christie betray a preference for one or the other?
3. What methods of reasoning and investigation do each of the detectives rely on? Are there similarities between their approaches?
4. Imagine a meeting between Poirot and Miss Marple. Do you think they would get along? Respect each other? Make a good investigative team?
5. What characteristics do Christie's villains share? Are her explanations of their motivations always consistent with the portraits she paints of them in the course of the novels?
6. Discuss Christie's portraits of the police. Are there difference between the way they are portrayed in the Poirot and Marple books?
7. Does Christie respect the rules of "fair play" one expects in a well-conceived and well-written mystery? Does she provide clues to the culprit without giving away too much? Does she ever keep the reader from knowing things the detective knows?
8. In *Murder at the Vicarage*, Miss Marple says, "I know that in books [the guilty party] is always the most unlikely person. I never find that rule applies in real life." Does Christie adhere to this theory herself? Which, if any, of the novels defy it?

9. In addition to the tension created by the central mysteries, what other elements add to the narrative pull of the novels? Do the romantic entanglements and family relationships in the books, for example, engage your interest and sympathy? Do you think that the books transcend the boundaries of the mystery genre?
10. One of the pleasures of Christie's fiction is the intimate view one gets of life of England between the World Wars and the years immediately following World War II. How do Christie's depictions of the period compare to others you have read? Do her books confirm your previous impressions of mid-twentieth century English society? Were there details that surprised or disturbed you?
11. Compare and contrast the detection methods employed in these classics to the techniques featured in contemporary crime novels or television programs. Which style do you find more compelling and why?
12. Christie is a seminal figure in crime literature. What contemporary mystery novelists are her most obvious heirs?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Agatha Christie was born in the Devonshire seaside resort of Torquay in 1890. She first tried her hand at detective fiction while working at a hospital during World War I, creating the detective Hercule Poirot in her debut novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920). She achieved wide popularity with *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), which would be followed by seventy-nine more novels and story collections over the next six decades. Characterized by their intricate plotting, her works were regular bestsellers in both England and America, and have been translated into more than fifty languages, making her one of the most popular authors of all time. In addition to her influential legacy as the Queen of Crime, Christie also found success as a playwright, and many of her works were adapted for film and television. Agatha Christie achieved Britain's highest honor in 1971 when she was made a Dame of the British Empire. She died in 1976.