



## A Wonderful Detective Writer- Agatha Christie

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**Abstract:** One hundred and twenty-three years ago the most popular mystery writer ever with well over two billion copies of her work sold was born. Over a career that spanned over a half century, Agatha Christie (1890-1976) published more than 150 short stories and wildly successful plays like '*Witness for the Prosecution*' and '*The Mousetrap*', still playing at London's West End, and of course, more than 60 novels, featuring beloved detectives like *Maryland Hercules* and a dizzying array of mystery plots. The novel the '*Death Comes as the End*' (1944) is the only historical mystery that Christie ever published. It was set in Thebes in 2000 BC, drawn from the extensive digs of Christie and her second husband, the archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan, conducted over several trips to Middle Eastern spots. Her unique literary talents have crossed every boundary of age, race, class, geography and education. While she refined the template for a fictional form, the reading of her books became an international pastime.

**Abstract:** archaeologist, people, *Mysterious*

### Introduction:

Agatha Christie was the greatest component of the classical detective stories. Her unique literary talents have crossed every boundary of age, race, class, geography and education. She is the best-selling author of all time being influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, Anna Katherine Green and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Christie was born in 1890 into a wealthy upper-middle-class family in Torquay, United Kingdom. She was the youngest of the three children in her family. As a child Agatha never attended school. She was taught at home by a governess and tutors. She became adept at creating games to keep her occupied at a very young age. A shy child unable to express her feelings adequately, she first turned to music as a means of expression. Later she became a crime novelist, short story writer and playwright. Although she wrote six romance novels under the pseudonym of Mary Westmacott, her reputation rests on the 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections that she wrote under

her own name, which have sold over two billion copies—an amount only surpassed by the Bible and the works of William Shakespeare.

**Her Career:** She met her future husband just before the First World War. After he was sent to the Western Front, she worked with the Voluntary Aid Detachment, and in the chemist dispensary, giving her working background knowledge of medicines and poisons. Christie's writing career began during the war after she was challenged by her sister to write a detective story; she produced *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, which was turned down by two publishers before it was eventually published in 1920. Following the limited success of the novel, she continued to write and steadily built up a fan base for what *Contemporary Authors* call "her unflinching clever plots". She went on to write over a hundred works, including further novels, short stories and plays. Additionally she wrote two volumes of poetry, two autobiographical books and six romantic works. One of Christie's



plays, *The Mousetrap*, opened in the West End Theatre in 1952.

In September 2015 a public vote identified *And Then There Were None*—originally published in 1939 under the name *Ten Little Niggers*—as the public's favourite Christie novel; the book was the writer's favourite, and the one she found most difficult to write.

**Marriage:** In 1924, at the age of 24, she married Archie Christie, the First World War fighter pilot. While he was off at war, she worked as a nurse. It was while working in a hospital during the war that Christie first came up with the idea of writing a detective novel. Although it was completed in a year, it was not published until five years later. In 1926, Archie asked for a divorce, having fallen in love with another woman. Agatha already being upset by the recent death of her mother disappeared. All of England became wrapped up in the case of the now famous missing writer. She was found three weeks later in a small hotel, explaining to police that she had lost her memory. Thereafter, it was never again mentioned or elaborated upon by Christie

In September 1930 Christie married the archaeologist Max Mallowan, whom she met when she visited the excavations in Mesopotamia. The pair travelled frequently on expeditions. She used the experiences as a basis for her plots, including *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936) and *Death on the Nile* (1937). She also wrote the autobiographical travel book *Come, Tell Me How You Live* (1946), which described their life in Syria; her biographer, Janet Morgan, reports that "archaeologists have celebrated ... Christie's contribution to Near Eastern exploration".

She wrote eighty crime novels and story collections, fourteen plays, and several other books. Her books have sold roughly four billion copies and have been translated into 45 languages. She is the creator of the two most enduring figures in crime literature *Hercules Poirot* and *Miss Jane Marple* and author of *The Mousetrap*, the longest-running play in the history of modern theatre.

### Top Detective novels of Agatha Christie

**1. The Murder of Roger Ackroyd (1926):** Hercules Poirot has retired to the village of King's Abbot to cultivate marrows. But when wealthy Roger Ackroyd is found stabbed in his study, he agrees to investigate. A typical village murder mystery; or so it seems until the last chapter with its stunning revelation. This title would still be discussed today even if Christie had never written another book. An unmissable, and still controversial, milestone of detective fiction.

**2. Peril at End House (1932):** The impoverished owner of End House hosts a party where fireworks camouflage the shot that kills her cousin. Which of the other guests is a murderer? Perfectly paced, with subtle and ingenious clueing, and an unexpected but totally logical solution. Of its type, perfection; this is how the classic detective story should be written.

**3. Murder on the Orient Express (1934):** The glamorous Orient Express stops during the night, blocked by snowdrifts. Next morning the mysterious Mr. Ratchett is found stabbed in his compartment and untrodden snow shows that the killer is still on board. This glamorous era of train travel provides Poirot with an international cast of suspects and one of his biggest challenges. Predicated on an inspired



gimmick, this is one of the greatest surprise endings in the genre.

**4. The ABC Murders (1935):** Despite advance warnings, Poirot is unable to prevent the murders of Alice Ascher, Betty Barnard and Carmichael Clarke. Can he stop the ABC Killer before he reaches D? One of the earliest examples of the "serial killer" novel this classic Christie is based on a beautifully simple premise. But how many readers are as clever as Poirot?

**5. And Then There Were None (1939):** Ten people are invited to an island for the weekend. Although they all harbour a secret, they remain unsuspecting until they begin to die, one by one, until eventually ... there are none. Panic ensues when the diminishing group realises that one of their own number is the killer. A perfect combination of thriller and detective story, this much-copied plot is Christie's greatest technical achievement.

**6. Five Little Pigs (1943):** Sixteen years ago, Caroline Crale died in prison while serving a life sentence for poisoning her husband. Her daughter asks Poirot to investigate a possible miscarriage of justice and he approaches the other five suspects. This sublime novel is a subtle and ingenious detective story, an elegiac love story and a masterful example of storytelling technique, with five separate accounts of one devastating event. Christie's greatest achievement.

**7. Crooked House (1949):** The Leonides family all live together in a not-so-little crooked house. But which of them poisoned the patriarch, Aristides? Murder in the extended family always provided fertile ground for Christie, and this was one of her own favourites. Another example of a sinister reinterpretation of a nursery rhyme with an ending that her publishers initially

considered too shocking, even for Agatha Christie.

**8. A Murder is Announced (1950):** In the village of Chipping Cleghorn, a murder is announced in the local paper's small ads. As Miss Blacklock's friends gather for what they fondly imagine will be a parlour game, an elaborate murder plot is set in motion. This was Christie's 50th title and remains Miss Marple's finest hour. Notable also for its setting in post-war Britain (a factor vital to the plot) this is arguably the last of the ingeniously clued and perfectly paced Christies.

**9. Endless Night (1967):** Working-class Michael Rogers tells the story of his meeting and marrying Ellie, a fantastically rich American heiress. As they settle in their dream house in the country, it becomes clear that not everyone is happy for them. A very atypical Christie, this tale of menacing suspense builds to a horrific climax and shows that even after 45 years she had not lost the power to confound her readers. The best novel from her last 20 years.

**10. Curtain: Poirot's Last Case (1975,** but written during the Second World War)

An old and frail Poirot returns to the scene of his first case, the country house Styles, now a guest-house. He summons his friend Hastings to help identify the killer he suspects is a fellow-guest. Christie uses every trick in the book to produce an unforgettable, yet poignant, swan song for the little Belgian. This novel was written during the Blitz and stored in a safe to be published after Christie's own death. It was actually published in October 1975 (Christie died in January 1976) and Poirot received a front-page obituary in the New York Times. In a lifetime of literary tours-de-force, this is the biggest shock of all.



**Conclusion:**

Agatha Christie was the literary equivalent of pool-hall prowess, the sign of a mis-spent youth. Looking back on it now, it seems clear that *Enid Blyton* was the gateway drug: the Famous Five and the Secret Seven gave a craving that soon only *Hercules Poirot* and *Miss Marple* could satisfy. Apart from the most famous plots, the details have long since faded, save the odd motive for murder and peculiar words but what still linger in the memory are the paranoid parsing of every paragraph for that tell-tale clue; the late nights when lights out had to be disobeyed as a denouement loomed; and the satisfying frustration of being outwitted time and again by a master plotter. Part of the attraction undoubtedly was that Christie was as prolific as she was talented. No matter how many you read, there was always the assurance that there were plenty more.

**References:**

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