

Book Club

Discussion Guide

Murder on the Orient Express by Agatha Christie

About the Author



- *Birth— September 15, 1890*
- *Where—Torquay, Devon, in the southwest part of England*
- *Education—Reimann School (Art school in Berlin)*

Agatha Christie was a mystery writer who was one of the world's top-selling authors with works like 'Murder on the Orient Express' and 'The Mystery of the Blue Train.'

Who Was Agatha Christie?

Best-selling author Agatha Christie published her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, in 1920, and went on to become one of the most famous writers in history, with mysteries like *Murder at the Vicarage*, *Partners in*

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Crime and Sad Cypress. She sold billions of copies of her work and was also a noted playwright and romance author.

Early Life and Background

Christie was born Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller on September 15, 1890, in Torquay, Devon, in the southwest part of England. The youngest of three siblings, she was educated at home by her mother, who encouraged her daughter to write. As a child, Christie enjoyed fantasy play and creating characters, and, when she was 16, she moved to Paris for a time to study vocals and piano.

In 1914, she wed Colonel Archibald Christie, a Royal Flying Corps pilot, and took up nursing during World War I. She published her first book, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, in 1920; the story focused on the murder of a rich heiress and introduced readers to one of Christie's most famous characters—Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.

Books and Disappearance

In 1926, Christie released *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, a hit which was later marked as a genre classic and one of the author's all-time favorites. She dealt with tumult that same year, however, as her mother died and her husband revealed that he was in a relationship with another woman. Traumatized by the revelation, Christie disappeared only to be discovered by authorities several days later at a Harrogate hotel, registered under the name of her husband's mistress

(From Wikipedia.)

About the Book

Just after midnight, a snowdrift stops the Orient Express in its tracks. The luxurious train is surprisingly full for the time of the year, but by the morning it is one passenger fewer. An American tycoon lies dead in his compartment, stabbed a dozen times, his door locked from the inside.

Isolated and with a killer in their midst, detective Hercule Poirot must identify the murderer—in case he or she decides to strike again.

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Discussion Questions

1. Did you finish the book? Did you like it?
2. Were you able to figure out who the murderer was before the very end? If so, what tipped you off? If not, who did you think the murderer was? Were you surprised when Poirot revealed the culprits?
3. Have you read any Agatha Christie novels before? If so, did it help you to figure out who the murderer was earlier in the story?
4. Poirot uses a series of educated guesses/logic/psychological tells to solve this crime. Do you think that this is similar or different to detective work today? Why/why not?
5. What did you think of the 'out' that Poirot gave to the murderers? Did you think it was the right thing? Why did Poirot choose not to report the crime and punish them?
6. What is the difference between revenge and justice? Is there one? Were the murderers justified in killing Mr. Ratchett/Cassetti?
7. If you had to rewrite Murder on the Orient Express in the present day, where would you set it? Would you change the characters or the jobs that they held? Why?
8. Which character did you identify with most? Why?
9. Have you seen either of the movies? Before or after reading the book? Were they similar or different? Did it affect how you read the book?
10. The story is set on a train. Does the setting have any meaning or symbolism? What impact does the setting have on the story?
11. Portions of the book are reminiscent and based off of the kidnapping case involving the Charles Lindbergh baby. What are the similarities and differences between the real-life story and the fictional account in this book?
12. The characters are travelling from Syria to London. Contrast the social/political climate in the Middle East in today's world with that of 1933.

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13. The characters repeatedly reference America throughout the story. Does America carry particular symbolism or meaning? How is the diversity of American society shown through the passengers? Does it affect Poirot's investigation of the case?

14. The characters often refer to characteristics of people due to their race/nationality/etc. Which character(s) do you see doing this the most? M. Bouc. What do you think of this? Is it a product of the time when the book was written, when the book was set? Or was it intended by Christie to examine the role that prejudice and profiling play in a criminal investigation? Does it appear to be racist or bigoted to you reading it today?

15. Before she is revealed as Linda Arden, did you suspect that Mrs. Hubbard actually was Linda Arden? Was there anything that tipped you off (behavior, descriptions, etc.)? Is there anything, looking back in hindsight, that is a tip-off?

16. The dragon motif is mentioned in the novel. Do you recall where? The red kimono...anywhere else? Does this have particular symbolism?

17. Have you read other murder mysteries? Does this follow the same format? Why/why not? How is it unique?

18. Have you read *The Woman on the Orient Express* by Lindsay Jayne Ashford? Or any other books that play off of the story or theme of this book?

(Questions from the publisher)