

Themes: *Family, Home, Food, Play, Stories, Discovery*

Summary

Agatha Christie's foreword is written in 1950. She describes the feeling of suddenly being overcome with the desire to write down her memories in an autobiography, and that she does not wish to follow chronology strictly, rather to "plunge my hand into a lucky dip and come up with a handful of assorted memories".

In part one, we start to learn about the history of Agatha Christie's family, the loving relationship between her "enigmatic" mother and "agreeable" father, and how they came to live in Torquay. She also fondly remembers Nursie, her nanny, and the "rock of stability" in her life. It's at this stage where Christie first starts to hear stories from Nursie and her mother, and eventually starts to learn (with some difficulty at first) how to read and write stories herself. Christie describes the food, and domestic staff at Ashfield house, and how the social norms of that period dictated her dynamics with them. Her love of dogs is also introduced in this section, when, on her fifth birthday, she is gifted a Yorkshire terrier puppy. As Christie continues to move through her early memories, aged five or so, she reflects on going to church for the first time, the dinner parties and guests at Ashfield, and childhood friendships.

Quotes

"I have always thought life exciting and I still do"

"'I'm afraid, Ma'am,' said Nursie apologetically to mother the next day, 'Miss Agatha can read.'"

"What I liked playing with as a child, I have liked playing with later in life. Houses, for instance."

"When I look back to the past, what do I remember? Silly little things about local sewing-women, the bread twists I made in the kitchen, the smell of Colonel F.'s breath"

Questions

- What are your thoughts on the way Agatha Christie describes her family, house and Torquay?
- What feelings were evoked when reading her reflections on her childhood at Ashfield? Did the tone and structure of how she describes her memories affect this?
- Knowing about her future career path, were there any moments that stood out from her childhood as influential to this?
- What were your impressions of Christie's household and domestic staff, as well as the food that was prepared in the house? What about the manners and courtesies of the time?
- Agatha Christie reflects on learning how to play by herself, and how she believes it to have done her good. How do you feel about this sentiment?