

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 Agatha Christie's family; the history of her parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, as well as the loving relationship between her "enigmatic" mother and "agreeable" father. 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. 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 comings and goings of 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."

Questions

- What are your thoughts on the way Agatha Christie describes her parents, house and family history?
- What feelings were evoked when reading her reflections on her childhood at Ashford? 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? 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?