

THE WORLD OF AGATHA CHRISTIE

READ

reflections
on age

SOLVE

memory
quizzes

EXPLORE

her late
works

DELVE

into
Ariadne Oliver



The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side

AN EXTRACT [1962]

One had to face the fact: St Mary Mead was not the place it had been. In a sense, of course, nothing was what it had been. You could blame the war (both the wars) or the younger generation, or women going out to work, or the atom bomb, or just the Government—but what one really meant was the simple fact that one was growing old. Miss Marple, who was a very sensible lady, knew that quite well. It was just that, in a queer way, she felt it more in St Mary Mead, because it had been her home for so long.

St Mary Mead, the old world core of it, was still there. The Blue Boar was there, and the church and the vicarage and the little nest of Queen Anne and Georgian houses, of which hers was one. Miss Hartnell's house was still there, and also Miss Hartnell, fighting progress to the last gasp. Miss Wetherby had passed on and her house was now inhabited by the bank manager and his family, having been given a face-lift by the painting of doors and windows a bright royal blue. There were new people in most of the other old houses, but the houses themselves were little changed in appearances since the people who had bought them had done so because they liked what the house agent called 'old world charm'. They just added another bathroom, and spent a good deal of money on plumbing, electric cookers, and dish-washers.

But though the houses looked much as before, the same could hardly be said of the village street. When shops changed hands there, it was with a view to immediate and intemperate modernization. The fishmonger was unrecognizable with new super windows behind which the refrigerated fish gleamed. The butcher had remained conservative—good meat is good meat, if you have the money to pay for it. If not, you take the cheaper cuts and the

'St Mary Mead, the old world core of it, was still there.'

tough joints and like it!

Barnes, the grocer, was still there, unchanged, for which Miss Hartnell and Miss Marple and others daily thanked Heaven. So obliging, comfortable chairs to sit in by the counter, and cosy discussions as to cuts of bacon, and varieties of cheese. At the end of the street, however, where Mr Toms had once had his basket shop stood a glittering new supermarket—anathema to the elderly ladies of St Mary Mead.

'Packets of things one's never even heard of,' exclaimed Miss Hartnell. 'All these great packets of breakfast cereal instead of cooking a child a proper breakfast of bacon and eggs. And you're expected to take a basket yourself and go round looking for things—it takes a quarter of an hour sometimes to find all one wants—and usually made up in inconvenient sizes, too much or too little. And then a long queue waiting to pay as you go out. Most tiring. Of course it's all very well for the people from the Development—'

At this point she stopped.

Because, as was now usual, the sentence came to an end there. The Development, Period, as they would say in modern terms. It had an entity of its own, and a capital letter.

The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side Copyright © 1962 Agatha Christie Limited. All rights reserved.

1960s & 70s Writing

FACT FILE

Nostalgia meets a changing world in Agatha Christie's works of the 1960s and 1970s – with a sprinkling of the supernatural thrown in.

Christie muses upon scientific advancements and the future of humanity during this period. A conversation in *The Pale Horse* (1961) covers wireless communications alongside Man, Superman and Extra-Sensory Perception, while *Passenger to Frankfurt* (1970) challenges behaviour-changing processes. In her introduction to that novel, Christie talks about creating fantastical stories inspired by real-world events.

Descriptions of emerging fashion trends give us an immediate insight into character (and possibly Christie's own feelings!): "They were... what was called the off-beat generation. The girls looked, as girls always did look to me nowadays, dirty," says Mark Easterbrook in *The Pale Horse*. In *Hallowe'en Party* (1969), Mrs Goodbody opines: "But the boys—my word, they look like kingfishers and peacocks or birds of paradise." Chelsea beatniks and teddy boys receive mentions during this time, as do The Beatles.

As the decades progress, memory and old age become more prevalent. At *Bertram's Hotel* (1965) harks back to old-world comforts, while in *Elephants Can Remember* (1972) Ariadne Oliver delves into her past. In *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* (1962), an ageing Miss Marple looks back with nostalgia on St Mary Mead before the supermarket and housing development. Christie's own childhood memories also start to permeate: *Postern of Fate* (1973) contains similarities to Torquay, with Ashfield disguised as The Laurels and toys named Truelove and Mathilde.

Christie contrasts the advancement of technology with plenty of supernatural and magic themes. The title *By the Pricking of My Thumbs* (1968) is a quote from the witches of *Macbeth*, and is one of three novels to eerily mention a child behind the fireplace. The characters in *Endless Night* (1967) are fearful of a curse from a local woman, while witches feature heavily in *The Pale Horse*, with one chanting "The old magic and the new. The old knowledge of belief, the new knowledge of science. Together, they will prevail...".

1960s and 70s

A READING LIST



THE PALE HORSE [1961]

The Pale Horse, a former public house in the village of Much Deeping, is owned by three women who are rumoured to practice dark magic. Perhaps

they can provide some answers on the recent murder of Father Gorman. Mark Easterbrook and his sidekick Ginger Corrigan begin their investigations, but they seem to uncover more questions than answers. Expect voodoo, poisons, and love potions in this atmospheric mystery.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)



AT BERTRAM'S HOTEL [1965]

Bertram's Hotel, enjoyed by Miss Marple for its old-world charm, is nestled away in the heart of London's West End. A place of comfort and serenity, no one

would ever suspect Bertram's to be the epicentre of a violent chain of events. It all began when Canon Pennyfather arrived at the airport to fly to Lucerne a day later than planned. It's a good job Miss Marple is staying at the hotel as her keen eye doesn't miss a thing.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)



THIRD GIRL [1966]

Hercule Poirot was enjoying his cup of cocoa and brioche when a young lady admitted that she might have committed a murder. But before Poirot could take her name she disappeared. Together

with his friend Ariadne Oliver, Poirot begins his

investigations. He soon learns that the young woman shares a flat in London with two others: an efficient secretary and an artist. But what is this mysterious murder she spoke of? And where has she vanished to?

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)



ENDLESS NIGHT [1967]

Michael Rogers is a dreamer. He fantasises of becoming a wealthy man, marrying the woman he loves, and building a beautiful house for them to

share. After falling in love with Gipsy's Acre and meeting the heiress Ellie, everything seems to be fitting into place. But he fails to heed the warnings of an ancient curse that has tormented Gipsy's Acre and soon fatal 'accidents' begin happening...

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)

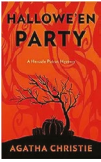


BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS [1968]

Tommy and Tuppence head to Sunny Ridge, a gothic retirement home, to visit Tommy's elderly Aunt Ada.

A spirited woman, Ada distrusted the local doctors and didn't shy away from saying what was on her mind. But nothing could have prepared the couple for the spine-chilling adventure they would embark upon after one of the residents mentioned a poisoned mushroom stew, and another spoke of a poor child behind the fireplace.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)



HALLOWE'EN PARTY [1969]

A Hallowe'en party, is in full swing when Joyce, a hostile thirteen-year-old boasts she once witnessed a murder. When no one believes her, she storms off.

A few hours later she is found dead, drowned in an apple-bobbing tub. Flustered by the upsetting events of the evening, Ariadne Oliver calls on Poirot to solve the case. But the mystery is far more complex than he originally thought.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)



NEMESIS [1971]

Shortly after reading about his death in the paper, Miss Marple receives a letter from Jason Rafiel, who she met in the Caribbean. Inside are

instructions to investigate a crime which, if completed, comes with a handsome reward. The only problem is that the letter doesn't state who was involved or where and when the crime took place. Can Miss Marple solve this puzzling enigma? She will certainly try.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)



ELEPHANTS CAN REMEMBER [1972]

Ariadne Oliver's reluctant attendance at a literary lunch results in an even less desirable hunt for a killer... The author is

on the trail of distant memories about a couple who died as part of an apparent suicide pact. Poirot advises against pursuing the case, but against both their better judgements, the threat of an impossible solution spurs them on to solve it using clues from the past.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)



CURTAIN [1975]

An ageing, ailing Poirot is joined by Hastings back where it all began, at Styles Court in Essex. Styles is now a guest house populated by an eclectic

group of residents among whom, Poirot says, is someone responsible for multiple deaths. Can they expose the culprit? Despite being published in 1975, this last novel to feature Hercule Poirot was written during World War II and stowed safely in a vault.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)




AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY [1977]

Written over the course of 15 years, Agatha Christie's *An Autobiography* is a spell-binding account of her life. She recounts her memories from early

childhood, her experiences through two world wars, as well as her archaeological expeditions and journey to becoming an acclaimed author. Although this book was completed in 1965, it wasn't published until 1977, as Christie insisted it not be released until after her death.

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)

Have we included one of your favourite stories from this period? Get in touch with us via email (generalenquiries@agathachristie.com) or our social media channels to let us know.

 [officialagathachristie](#)

 [agathachristie](#)

 [OfficialAgathaChristie](#)

Meet Ariadne Oliver

A WORD SEARCH

Fictional author Ariadne Oliver takes a starring role in several novels from this period. Can you find 15 items associated with her in this word search?

S G U R L O N D O N I M E F W W F K Z B
S X P Q K W Z O E W A N A M A K E R M Y
D U N R L T P G V W P G O D M O T H E R
Z Y N S R I A H J O V H H H R C R F G Y
L Y W R I T E R S B L O C K E Z A L F N
T D S I N T U I T I O N M P B N P E H H
H G M L I D J H G Q S T B X I N A D A E
E W G B Z M I D U Q V E I T I F R L I D
L C T H X O E G M C E V Q W B S C E B S
O C Q T T H E D Y I N G G O L D F I S H
T B V M K A Y D R P H O X J D F I Z T R
U A T O E E N D P K J K S C G B O G J F
S Z P Z D E G K T E E G I X K X W F D E
M L B P I S K Z U J R R B H C K L T E D
U L D R L L C S E M S O L M I Y N F Z I
R N F D C E F X Z O O E W A N T F M P X
D E Y V Z R S L V N N P A V P O U E Q D
E A P Y T D E T E C T I O N C L U B C K
R M U R D E R H U N T V L O T G M B A W
F A U T H O R R C R T K R I R I P W F K

APPLES
AUTHOR
COFFEE
DETECTION CLUB
FRIEND

GODMOTHER
INTUITION
LONDON
MURDER HUNT
SVEN HJERSON

THE DYING GOLDFISH
THE LOTUS MURDER
TINA FEY
WRITER'S BLOCK
ZOE WANAMAKER



The Official Agatha Christie Puzzle Book

Immerse yourself in the world of Agatha Christie with this compendium of perplexing puzzles. Can you solve them correctly and follow the trail to find the missing librarian? The perfect gift for any Agatha Christie puzzler.

RRP: \$21.99, £16.99

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)

Endless Night

AN EXTRACT [1967]

'There's no luck for them as meddles with Gipsy's Acre. There never has been.'

I laughed. She spoke sharply.

'Don't laugh, young man. It comes to me as maybe one of these days you'll laugh on the wrong side of your mouth. There's never been no luck there, not in the house nor yet in the land.'

'What happened in the house?' I asked.

'Why has it been empty so long? Why was it left to fall down?'

'The last people that lived there died, all of them.'

'How did they die?' I asked out of curiosity.

'Best not to speak of it again. But no one cared to come and live in it afterwards. It was left to moulder and decay. It's forgot by now and best that it should be.'

'But you could tell me the story,' I said, wheedlingly. 'You know all about it.'

'I don't gossip about Gipsy's Acre.' Then she let her voice drop to a kind of phoney beggar's whine. 'I'll tell your fortune now, my pretty lad, if you like. Cross my palm with silver and I'll tell your fortune. You're one of those that'll go far one of these days.'

'I don't believe nonsense about fortune-telling,' I said, 'and I haven't any silver. Not to spare, anyway.'

She came nearer to me and went on in a wheedling voice.

'Sixpence now. Sixpence now. I'll do it for sixpence. What's that? Nothing at all. I'll do it for sixpence because you're a handsome lad with a ready tongue and a way with you. It could be that you'll go far.'

I fished a sixpence out of my pocket, not because I believed in any of her foolish superstitions but because for some reason I liked the old fraud even if I did see through her. She grabbed the coin from me, and said:

'Give me your hand then. Both hands.'

She took my hands in her withered claw and

I'm not superstitious. I believe in luck, of course, who doesn't?

stared down at the open palms. She was silent for a minute or two, staring. Then she dropped my hands abruptly, almost pushing them away from her. She retreated a step and spoke harshly.

'If you know what's good for you, you'll get out of Gipsy's Acre here and now and you won't come back! That's the best advice I can give you. Don't come back.'

'Why not? Why shouldn't I come back?'

'Because if you do you'll come back to sorrow and loss and danger maybe. There's trouble, black trouble waiting for you. Forget you ever saw this place. I'm warning you.'

'Well of all the—'

But she had turned away and was retreating to the cottage. She went in and slammed the door. I'm not superstitious. I believe in luck, of course, who doesn't? But not a lot of superstitious nonsense about ruined houses with curses on them. And yet I had an uneasy feeling that the sinister old creature had seen something in my hands. I looked down at my two palms spread out in front of me. What could anyone see in the palms of anyone's hands? Fortune-telling was arrant nonsense—just a trick to get money out of you—money out of your silly credulity.

Endless Night Copyright © 1967 Agatha Christie Limited.
All rights reserved.

By the Pricking of My Thumbs

AN EXTRACT [1968]

'Look here, Tuppence, this whole thing is all somethings and someones. It's just an idea you've thought up. You don't want to go mixing yourself up in things that are no business of yours—'

'There's nothing to be mixed up in according to you,' said Tommy. 'So you needn't worry at all.'

'You leave Sunny Ridge alone.'

'I don't mean to go back to Sunny Ridge. I think they've told me all they know there. I think that that old lady was quite safe whilst she was there. I want to find out where she is now—I want to get to her wherever she is in time— before something happens to her.'

'What on earth do you think might happen to her?'

'I don't like to think. But I'm on the trail—I'm going to be Prudence Beresford, Private Investigator. Do you remember when we were Blunt's Brilliant Detectives?'

'I was,' said Tommy. 'You were Miss Robinson, my private secretary.'

'Not all the time. Anyway, that's what I'm going to do while you're playing at International Espionage at Hush Hush Manor. It's the "Save Mrs Lancaster" that I'm going to be busy with.'

'You'll probably find her perfectly all right.'

'I hope I shall. Nobody would be better pleased than I should.'

'How do you propose to set about it?'

'As I told you, I've got to think first. Perhaps an advertisement of some kind? No, that would be a mistake.'

'Well, be careful,' said Tommy, rather inadequately.

Tuppence did not deign to reply.

On Monday morning, Albert, the domestic mainstay of the Beresfords' life for many long years, ever since he had been roped into anti-criminal activities by them as a carrot-haired lift-boy, deposited the tray of early morning tea on the table between the two beds, pulled back

'I'm going to be Prudence Beresford, Private Investigator. Do you remember when we were Blunt's Brilliant Detectives?'

the curtains, announced that it was a fine day, and removed his now portly form from the room.

Tuppence yawned, sat up, rubbed her eyes, poured out a cup of tea, dropped a slice of lemon in it, and remarked that it seemed a nice day, but you never knew.

Tommy turned over and groaned.

'Wake up,' said Tuppence. 'Remember you're going places today.'

'Oh Lord,' said Tommy. 'So I am.'

He, too, sat up and helped himself to tea. He looked with appreciation at the picture over the mantelpiece.

'I must say, Tuppence, your picture looks very nice.'

'It's the way the sun comes in from the window sideways and lights it up.'

'Peaceful,' said Tommy.

'If only I could remember where it was I'd seen it before.'

'I can't see that it matters. You'll remember sometime or other.'

'That's no good. I want to remember now.'

'But why?'

'Don't you see? It's the only clue I've got. It was Mrs Lancaster's picture—'

By the Pricking of My Thumbs Copyright © 1968 Agatha Christie Limited. All rights reserved.

Locate that Item

A QUIZ

Match these household objects to the correct Agatha Christie novel.



Coffee Machine



Martini Glass



Painting



Door Number 19



For Sale Sign



Dog Lead

By the Pricking of My Thumbs
Endless Night
Postern of Fate

The Clocks
The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side
The Pale Horse



Agatha Christie Writer's Journal

This hardcover lined journal, peppered with quotes from the Queen of Crime, is sure to inspire budding writers, readers and thinkers alike. Smartly presented, and featuring words from some of Christie's most beloved characters, we think it is the perfect present for creative crime fiction fans.

RRP: \$16.95, £14.99

[SHOP IN THE US](#) | [SHOP IN THE UK](#)

ANSWERS - Coffee Machine from *The Pale Horse*, Martini Glass from *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, Painting from *By the Pricking of My Thumbs*, Door with Number 19 from *The Clocks*, For Sale Sign from *Endless Night*, Dog Lead from *Postern of Fate*

Why Read the Late Works?

A FAN PERSPECTIVE

In overviews of Christie's work, a critic waspishly comments, "You can skip the books she wrote during the last decades of her life," or "Read nothing published after 1960 except for *The Pale Horse* and *Endless Night*." These statements dismiss Christie's later works, but is this a fair and just analysis? No.

Nearly all of her most famous titles (and their shocking twists) were published prior to Christie's 70th birthday. Of the most surprising endings of her later novels, many of them reflect solutions she used decades previously. But even when she revisits old ideas, she places a new spin on them. Christie was always trying new approaches and flexing her creative muscles, and a woman who led literary innovations should be given credit for never going on autopilot.

The suggestion that Christie ought to have permanently placed the cover over her typewriter when she reached her seventies is one that should be hotly refuted. There are a number of assumptions baked into such perspectives that I find seriously flawed. First, there is a distinct air of ageism at play. Certainly, some people display different levels of ability during their later years. Life spans vary widely, and one person's physical and mental capacity at a particular point in their existence might be radically different from another's. It's challenging to write a novel when one is in one's twenties. Christie managed this feat multiple times in her eighties. To me, Christie producing full-length, bestselling novels into her mid-eighties is inspirational. *She didn't go gently into that good night*; she went out swinging with as much literary energy as she did half a century earlier.

Christie never stopped striving and

experimenting, and while readers can disagree on the quality of the results, one should respect the effort that went into the last novels of her lengthy career. Even if your later work is judged to be not as strong as when you were in your prime, "quitting when you're on top" isn't necessarily going out on a win, sometimes it's creating a legacy of fear: fear of failure and a refusal to take the risks that often produce great results.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Christie's later works is an awareness of the role that the past plays on the present. In several of Christie's early works, like *Death on the Nile*, prominent characters insist that it is the present and future that matter, not the past. But by the later years of Christie's life, there's often an increasing sense of nostalgia for a lost past, an admittedly imperfect time that nonetheless brought plenty of little joys and comforts. It's the artistic expression of a woman who was looking back on her happiest times while still trying to make the most of the time she had left.

And for this reason, people who love Agatha Christie and her work ought to look at her last novels with fresh eyes, because they contain some of her most personal writing, filled with poignant moments, as well as her attempts to convey her lessons she'd learned about living, loving, and using the past to propel yourself forward through life.

Written by Agatha Christie expert Chris Chan.

Do you Remember?

A QUIZ

1. Which 1960s novel opens with Poirot enjoying a "steaming cup of chocolate" and a brioche?

2. Poirot stars in more full-length novels than Miss Marple in the 1960s. True or false?

3. Which story from the 1970s challenges behaviour-changing brain operations?

4. Which two novels published in the 1970s, were written in a different decade?

5. DYEING URNS is an Aga-gram of which location from one of Christie's spooky stories from the 60s?

6. Which recurring character from the Christie canon stars in *The Pale Horse*?

7. Captain Hastings returns to Styles to help Poirot with his final case. True or False?

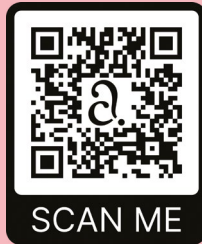
8. Who pays for Miss Marple's trips to the Golden Palm Hotel, in the Caribbean and Bertram's Hotel, London?

Answers: 1. Third Girl 2. False - they are both in three 3. Passenger to Frankfurt 4. Curtain, and Sleeping Murder 5. SUNNY RIDGE 6. Arisande Oliver 7. True 8. Mervyn Raymond West

1960s & 1970s

For more extracts, features, reading lists, games
and trivia visit agathachristie.com

Sign up to the monthly Agatha Christie newsletter



 [officialagathachristie](https://www.instagram.com/officialagathachristie)

 [agathachristie](https://twitter.com/agathachristie)

 [OfficialAgathaChristie](https://www.facebook.com/OfficialAgathaChristie)

AGATHA CHRISTIE, MARPLE, POIROT, TOMMY AND TUPPENCE and the Agatha Christie Signature are registered trademarks of Agatha Christie Limited in the UK and elsewhere. All rights reserved.



#READCHRISTIE2024