

THE WORLD OF AGATHA CHRISTIE

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Christie's
early works

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1920s trivia

EXPLORE

the decade

DELVE

into the
Grand Tour



The Mysterious Affair at Styles

AN EXTRACT [1920]

As we drove through the village, I remembered that I wanted some stamps, so accordingly we pulled up at the post office.

As I came out again, I cannoned into a little man who was just entering. I drew aside and apologized, when suddenly, with a loud exclamation, he clasped me in his arms and kissed me warmly.

'Mon ami Hastings!' he cried. 'It is indeed mon ami Hastings!'

'Poirot!' I exclaimed.

I turned to the pony-trap.

'This is a very pleasant meeting for me, Miss Cynthia.

This is my old friend, Monsieur Poirot, whom I have not seen for years.'

'Oh, we know Monsieur Poirot,' said Cynthia gaily. 'But I had no idea he was a friend of yours.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Poirot seriously. 'I know Mademoiselle Cynthia. It is by the charity of that good Mrs Inglethorp that I am here.' Then, as I looked at him inquiringly: 'Yes, my friend, she had kindly extended hospitality to seven of my country-people who, alas, are refugees from their native land. We Belgians will always remember her with gratitude.'

Poirot was an extraordinary-looking little man.

He was hardly more than five feet four inches, but carried himself with great dignity. His head was exactly the shape of an egg, and he always perched it a little on one side. His moustache was very stiff and military. The neatness of his attire was almost incredible; I believe a speck of dust would have caused him more pain than a bullet wound. Yet this quaint dandified little man who, I was sorry to see, now limped badly, had been in his time one of the most celebrated members of the Belgian police. As a detective, his flair had been extraordinary, and he had achieved triumphs by unravelling some of the most baffling cases of the day.

He pointed out to me the little house inhabited by him and his fellow Belgians, and I promised to go and see him at an early date. Then he raised his hat with a flourish to Cynthia, and we drove away.

'He's a dear little man,' said Cynthia. 'I'd no idea you knew him.'

'You've been entertaining a celebrity unawares,' I replied.

And, for the rest of the way home, I recited to them the various exploits and triumphs of Hercule Poirot.

We arrived back in a very cheerful mood. As we entered the hall, Mrs Inglethorp came out of her boudoir. She looked flushed and upset.

'Oh, it's you,' she said.

'Is there anything the matter, Aunt Emily?' asked Cynthia.

'Certainly not,' said Mrs Inglethorp sharply. 'What should there be?' Then catching sight of Dorcas, the parlourmaid, going into the dining room, she called to her to bring some stamps into the boudoir.



The Mysterious Affair at Styles Copyright © 1920 Agatha Christie Limited. All rights reserved. Image © Tom Adams, 2016

The 1920s

A FACT FILE

The 1920s was a decade of crime fiction firsts for plenty of famous writers including Dorothy L. Sayers and Dashiell Hammett. A. A. Milne also published his first (and only) crime novel during this period.

Despite appearing across nine of the 13 television series of *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, Captain Hastings actually stars in relatively few of the Poirot novels. In the 1920s, he appears in just three Christie novels, and also narrates the short story collection *Poirot Investigates*.

After the discovery of Tutenkhamun's tomb by Lord Carnarvon in 1922, Christie wrote a short story called 'The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb' in which a fictional King's tomb is unearthed.

In the 1920s, the game Mah Jong was introduced into the Western world and it was extremely popular. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Dr Sheppard, Caroline, Colonel Carter and Miss Gannett can be found enjoying the game one evening.

In *The Secret Adversary*, Tommy and Tuppence visit a Lyon's corner house. J. Lyons & Co. was a British chain and in the early 1900s they branched out into tea shops in London. They are famous for their treacle tarts, battenbergs, Bakewell tarts and other sweet delicacies.

Scotland Yard's fingerprinting bureau was established in 1901 and in 1910 fingerprints were used in court as evidence for the first time in the US. The forensics of fingerprinting feature heavily in some of Christie's books from the 1920s, from extracting fingerprints from the scene of the crime, to using gloves already laced with fingerprints of criminals to evade detection.

World War One ended in 1918 but the aftermath continued well into the 1920s. Influences from the war appear throughout Christie's stories from the decade including war refugees, characters desperate for money and work, international espionage, and even the sinking of the RMS Lusitania.

In 1922 radio was first used for entertainment purposes in the UK. Whilst they weren't aired during the 1920s, Christie's stories have been enjoyed by radio audiences from the mid-1930s all the way through to the present day.



1920s

A READING LIST



THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES [1920]

After sustaining injuries on the front line in World War One Hastings is invited to spend some time at the picturesque

Styles Court. This is the last place he expects to find himself in the midst of a fatal poisoning. Fortunately, former Belgian detective Hercule Poirot is living in the village.

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THE MAN IN THE BROWN SUIT [1924]

Introducing Anne Beddingfeld: orphan; dreamer; adventuress. Despite a difficult start, our heroine is determined to chase a bold, bright future. This leads

her to London, and on to South Africa to solve the mystery of three sudden deaths, with an unlikely group of travel companions to share her story with.

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THE SECRET ADVERSARY [1922]

In the post-war struggle for work, Tommy and Tuppence boldly launch themselves into the unknown and develop a daring business scheme. Upon receiving

their first assignment, however, they quickly realise they may be in a little over their heads. Set in the heart of London, the adventurous pair enter a world of dangerous secrets.

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POIROT INVESTIGATES [1924] SHORT STORY COLLECTION

In Christie's first short story collection Poirot and Hastings take on 11 challenging cases, from the mystery of an absurdly

cheap flat and a seaside jewel robbery, to a suspicious death in a locked room and the abduction of a Prime Minister.

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THE MURDER ON THE LINKS [1923]

An ill-fitting coat, a desperate love letter, and it can't be...two identically murdered corpses? In Poirot's second novel he is called to France, and accompanied

by Captain Hastings, must work quickly to untangle the web of clues and prevent further murders from taking place.

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THE SECRET OF CHIMNEYS [1925]

Anthony Cade agrees to travel to London on a suspicious assignment for a hefty fee. Meanwhile, politician George Lomax coaxes his friend Lord

Caterham to host an unusually staged gathering at Chimneys. What follows is a series of deadly misfires that threaten the British establishment and the fate of the country of Herzoslovakia.

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THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD [1926]

Roger Ackroyd's downfall was that he knew too much. He knew the woman he loved kept a deadly secret, he knew it drove her to suicide, but there was one thing he didn't know. The identity of her blackmailer. All would be disclosed in tonight's evening post, only Roger Ackroyd wouldn't live to open the revealing letter. Deemed one of Christie's greatest literary works, this is a must read for crime fiction enthusiasts.

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THE BIG FOUR [1927]

Captain Hastings' surprise return to England disrupts Poirot's voyage to South America. The pair become embroiled almost immediately in solving incidents of international espionage, deadly dealings and money-making schemes. The Big Four are at the heart of them all - but what will it cost the duo to uncover these secrets?

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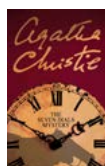


THE MYSTERY OF THE BLUE TRAIN [1928]

On board the luxurious Blue Train which has just pulled into Nice, a guard attempts to wake Ruth Kettering from her deep slumber. Only she is not asleep, she has been brutally murdered, and her precious rubies have been stolen. Poirot believes

the solution lies within re-enacting the journey... but with the murderer still on board, is Poirot tempting fate to strike again?

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THE SEVEN DIALS MYSTERY [1929]

We return to Chimneys for another deadly party. A practical joke sours when a man perishes surrounded by alarm clocks.

Bundle Brent, alarmed by another death at her family home, ventures into the heart of London's Seven Dials to try to make sense of the tragedy, and discovers a web of secrets.

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PARTNERS IN CRIME [1929] SHORT STORY COLLECTION

On their second adventure, Tommy and Tuppence are trusted with taking over Blunt's International Detective

Agency. Through a series of short stories the dynamic pair solve cases involving stolen jewels, poisoned chocolates, cryptic clues and more. With each tale parodying a great crime writer of the time or a famous fictional detective, there are plenty of Easter eggs for crime fiction aficionados to uncover.

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Agatha Christie's first decade of writing is rich with excitement, character introductions and plenty of mysteries. Let us know which one is your favourite via our social media channels.

The Secret Adversary

AN EXTRACT [1922]

'Now, my dear young lady, let us come to business.' His large face broadened into a smile. 'You want work? Well, I have work to offer you. What should you say now to £100 down, and all expenses paid?' Mr Whittington leaned back in his chair, and thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat.

Tuppence eyed him warily.

'And the nature of the work?' she demanded.

'Nominal—purely nominal. A pleasant trip, that is all.'

'Where to?'

Mr Whittington smiled again.

'Paris.'

'Oh!' said Tuppence thoughtfully. To herself she said: 'Of course, if father heard that he would have a fit! But somehow I don't see Mr Whittington in the rôle of the gay deceiver.'

'Yes,' continued Whittington. 'What could be more delightful? To put the clock back a few years—a very few, I am sure—and re-enter one of those charming pensionnats de jeunes filles with which Paris abounds—'

Tuppence interrupted him.

'A pensionnat?'

'Exactly. Madame Colombier's in the Avenue de Neuilly.'

Tuppence knew the name well. Nothing could have been more select. She had had several American friends there.

She was more than ever puzzled.

'You want me to go to Madame Colombier's? For how long?'

'That depends. Possibly three months.'

'And that is all? There are no other conditions?'

'None whatever. You would, of course, go in the character of my ward, and you would hold no communication with your friends. I should have to request absolute secrecy for the time being. By the way, you are English, are you not?'

'Yes.'

'Yet you speak with a slight American accent?'

'My great pal in hospital was a little American girl. I dare say I picked it up from her. I can soon get out of it again.'

'On the contrary, it might be simpler for you to pass as an American. Details about your past life in England might be more difficult to sustain. Yes, I think that would be decidedly better. Then—'

'One moment, Mr Whittington! You seem to be taking my consent for granted.'

Whittington looked surprised.

'Surely you are not thinking of refusing? I can assure you that Madame Colombier's is a most high-class and orthodox establishment. And the terms are most liberal.'

'Exactly,' said Tuppence. 'That's just it. The terms are almost too liberal, Mr Whittington. I cannot see any way in which I can be worth that amount of money to you.'

'No?' said Whittington softly. 'Well, I will tell you. I could doubtless obtain someone else for very much less.'

What I am willing to pay for is a young lady with sufficient intelligence and presence of mind to sustain her part well, and also one who will have sufficient discretion not to ask too many questions.'

Tuppence smiled a little. She felt that Whittington had scored.

'There's another thing. So far there has been no mention of Mr Beresford. Where does he come in?'

'Mr Beresford?'

'My partner,' said Tuppence with dignity. 'You saw us together yesterday.'

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Tommy and Tuppence

A WORD SEARCH

Hidden in the grid are 15 words or phrases relating to the adventurous duo, Tommy and Tuppence. Can you spot them all?

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

ADVERSARY
ALBERT
AUNT ADA
BERESFORD
DETECTIVES

DOVER STREET
ESPIONAGE
LUSITANIA
PARTNERS
PRUDENCE

SANS SOUCI
SUNNY RIDGE
TOMMY
TUPPENCE
YOUNG ADVENTURERS

"To all those who lead monotonous lives in the hope that they may experience at second-hand the delights and dangers of adventure."

Agatha Christie, Dedication in *The Secret Adversary*

The Man in the Brown Suit

AN EXTRACT [1924]

At this moment the man turned as though to retrace his steps along the platform. He glanced at me and then his eyes went on to something behind me, and his face changed. It was distorted by fear—almost panic. He took a step backwards as though involuntarily recoiling from some danger, forgetting that he was standing on the extreme edge of the platform, and went down and over.

There was a vivid flash from the rails and a crackling sound. I shrieked. People came running up. Two station officials seemed to materialize from nowhere and took command.

I remained where I was, rooted to the spot by a sort of horrible fascination. Part of me was appalled at the sudden disaster, and another part of me was coolly and dispassionately interested in the methods employed for lifting the man off the live rail and back on to the platform.

‘Let me pass, please. I am a medical man.’

A tall man with a brown beard pressed past me and bent over the motionless body.

As he examined it, a curious sense of unreality seemed to possess me. The thing wasn’t real—couldn’t be. Finally, the doctor stood upright and shook his head.

‘Dead as a door-nail. Nothing to be done.’

We had all crowded nearer, and an aggrieved porter raised his voice.

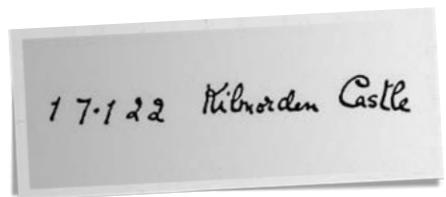
‘Now then, stand back there, will you? What’s the sense in crowding round?’

A sudden nausea seized me, and I turned blindly and ran up the stairs again towards the lift. I felt that it was too horrible. I must get out into the open air. The doctor who had examined the body was just ahead of me. The lift was just about to go up, another having descended, and he broke into a run. As he did so, he dropped a piece of paper.

*‘Dead as a door-nail.
Nothing to be done.’*

I stopped, picked it up, and ran after him. But the lift gates clanged in my face, and I was left holding the paper in my hand. By the time the second lift reached street level, there was no sign of my quarry. I hoped it was nothing important that he had lost, and for the first time I examined it.

It was a plain half-sheet of notepaper with some figures and words scrawled upon it in pencil. This is a facsimile of it:



On the face of it, it certainly did not appear to be of any importance. Still, I hesitated to throw it away. As I stood there holding it, I involuntarily wrinkled my nose in displeasure. Moth-balls again! I held the paper gingerly to my nose. Yes, it smelt strongly of them. But, then – I folded up the paper carefully and put it in my bag. I walked home slowly and did a good deal of thinking.

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Agatha Christie's 1920s Books

A QUIZ

1. Which poison is used to kill Emily Inglethorp in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*?
A. Strychnine B. Arsenic C. Digitalis D. Cyanide

2. Gerry Wade is a character from which story?
A. *The Seven Dials Mystery* B. *The Big Four*,
C. *The Man in the Brown Suit* D. *The Secret Adversary*

3. Which country do Poirot and Hastings travel to in *The Murder on the Links*?
A. Italy B. Scotland C. France D. Belgium

4. In *The Mystery of the Blue Train* what was the famous ruby called?
A. The Stone of Fire B. The Gem of Fire C. The Heart of Fire
D. The Jewel of Fire

5. Who plays the role of detective in *The Secret of Chimneys*?
A. Hercule Poirot B. Tommy and Tuppence
C. Superintendent Battle D. Colonel Race

6. What was the first novel to be adapted for the screen?
A. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* B. *The Secret Adversary*
C. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* D. *The Big Four*

7. What is the destination of the ship Kilmorden Castle in *The Man in the Brown Suit*?
A. Southampton B. Nice C. New York D. Cape Town

8. Captain Hastings features in *The Big Four*: true or false?

ANSWERS: 1. A 2. C 3. B 4. A 5. B 6. C 7. D 8. TRUE

Agatha Christie's Grand Tour

AN EXTRACT [1957]

Taken from *The Grand Tour: Letters and Photographs from the British Empire Exhibition*, edited by Mathew Prichard

My memories of Cape Town are more vivid than of other places; I suppose because it was the first real port we came to, and it was all so new and strange. Table Mountain with its queer flat shape, the sunshine, the delicious peaches, the bathing – it was all wonderful. I have never been back there – really I cannot think why. I loved it so much. We stayed at one of the best hotels, where Belcher made himself felt from the beginning. He was infuriated with the fruit served for breakfast, which was hard and unripe. ‘What do you call these?’ he roared. ‘Peaches? You could bounce them and they wouldn’t come to any harm.’ He suited his action to the word, and bounced about five unripe peaches. ‘You see?’ he said. They don’t squash. They ought to squash if they were ripe.’

It was then that I got my inkling that travelling with Belcher might not be as pleasant as it had seemed in prospect at our dinner-table in the flat a month before.

This is no travel book – only a dwelling back on those memories that stand out in my mind; times that have mattered to me, places and incidents that have enchanted me. South Africa meant a lot to me. From Cape Town the party divided. Archie, Mrs Hyam, and Sylvia went to Port Elizabeth, and were to rejoin us in Rhodesia. Belcher, Mr Hyam and I went to the diamond mines at Kimberley, on through the Matopos, to rejoin the others at Salisbury. My memory brings back to me hot dusty days in the train going north through the Karroo, being ceaselessly thirsty, and having iced lemonades. I remember a long straight line of railway in Bechuanaland. Vague thoughts come back of Belcher bullying Bates and arguing with Hyam. The Matopos I found exciting, with their

great boulders piled up as though a giant had thrown them there.

At Salisbury we had a pleasant time among happy English people, and from there Archie and I went on a quick trip to the Victoria Falls. I am glad I have never been back, so that my first memory of them remains unaffected. Great trees, soft mists of rain, its rainbow colouring, wandering through the forest with Archie, and every now and then the rainbow mist parting to show you for one tantalising second the Falls in all their glory pouring down. Yes, I put that as one of my seven wonders of the World.



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First Appearances

A QUIZ

Match these Christie characters to the book they first appeared in.

Note: Some books have more than one character.

The
Mysterious
Affair at Styles



The
Big Four



The
Secret
Adversary



The Man
in the
Brown Suit



The
Secret of
Chimneys



The Mystery
of the
Blue Train



- 1 TUPPENCE COWLEY
- 2 CAPTAIN HASTINGS
- 3 TOMMY BERESFORD
- 4 COLONEL RACE
- 5 SUPERINTENDENT BATTLE

- 6 INSPECTOR JAPP
- 7 HERCULE POIROT
- 8 EILEEN (BUNDLE) BRENT
- 9 GEORGE
- 10 VERA ROSSAKOFF

*"He's good-looking in his way, but dull as ditch water.
One of these strong silent men that lady novelists
and young girls always rave over."*

Sir Eustace Pedler MP on Colonel Race, *The Man in the Brown Suit*

ANSWERS A 2,6,7,B 10,C 1,3,D 4,E 5,8,F 9

20s

NINETEEN

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