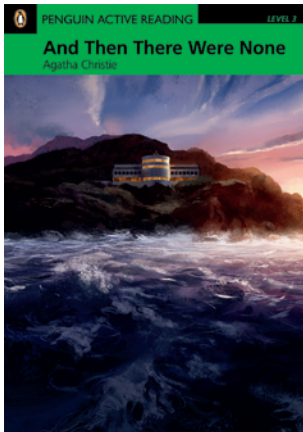




And Then There Were None

Agatha Christie



About the author

Agatha Christie was born in 1890 in Devon, England. She was the youngest child of an American father and an English mother. Her father died when she was eleven and the young Agatha became very attached to her mother. She never attended school because her mother disapproved of it, so she was educated at home in a house full of books. As a young woman, Agatha was described as tall with reddish-gold hair, fun and bright company, although shy at times. She married Lieutenant Archibald Christie in 1914 and in 1919, gave birth to her only child, Rosalind. They divorced in 1928. Two years earlier, following the death of her mother, Agatha completely disappeared for ten days, adding real life mystery to fact. She married again in 1930. She had a phenomenal literary career as a writer of crime stories. She published 66 novels, 154 short stories and 20 plays. Her book sales are only surpassed by the Bible and the works of Shakespeare. In 1971, she was awarded England's highest honour, the *Order of the British Empire*. She died in January, 1976, and is buried in the churchyard in Cholsey, Oxfordshire, near where she lived.

Summary

Ten people receive invitations to stay in a house on an island. Once there, they hear a recorded voice accusing each one of them of having committed a crime in the past for which they have not been punished by law. They are then murdered one by one, in ways that mirror a poem about little soldiers that is on the wall in their bedrooms. Each murder is followed by the disappearance of little soldier models from the dining-room. When the police discover ten dead bodies on the island they are initially mystified. A letter is then delivered to the police station,

written by the murderer. The murderer was one of the guests, a judge, who had always wanted to commit the perfect unsolvable crime. He had faked his own death whilst with the group, and then, after the other nine were dead, had shot himself.

Chapters 1–2: A group of people, most of whom don't know each other, are travelling to a mysterious island called Soldier Island. Mr Justice Wargrave has been invited to the island by a woman he met eight years ago. Vera Claythorne, a sports teacher in a school, had received a letter offering her a holiday job on the island. Philip Lombard, possibly a criminal, has also been offered work, but work of a dubious nature. Emily Brent, a mature lady, has been invited to stay on the island by somebody she thinks she remembers. General Macarthur has received an invitation from somebody he doesn't know. Dr Armstrong has been asked to come to the island to examine the sick wife of a man called Owen. Anthony Marston, a playboy type, thinks he is going to the island to attend Mr Owen's party. Finally, Mr Blore, is going to the island for unexplained reasons. They arrive at the only house on the island and are greeted by the servants, Mr and Mrs Rogers. A frightened looking Mrs Rogers shows Vera her room. On the wall there is a children's poem about ten little soldiers describing how they all died, one by one, in strange circumstances. All the guests have the same poem in their rooms. The guests are suspicious of each other, and puzzled as to why their host, Mr Owen, is not on the island with them.

Chapters 3–4: After dinner, Marston notices ten little model soldiers on a plate on the table. Suddenly, they hear a voice accusing all of them individually of past crimes. The source of the voice is record player in the next room. Justice Wargrave takes control of the situation and asks them all why they have come to the island. Blore tells them he is a detective and has been sent to guard the paintings of Mr Owen's wife. The judge concludes that Mr Owen doesn't exist, and that the person responsible for the record and inviting them to the island has used a cryptic name, 'Unknown', and that he knows a lot about all of them. They then begin to defend themselves against the accusations on the record. The judge condemned a man to death, but the man was a murderer. Vera says that the drowning of a boy in her care was an accident. General Macarthur says he didn't send an officer to his death as it was a consequence of war. Anthony Marston says he



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couldn't have avoided killing two children who ran in front of his car. Mr Rogers declares he and his wife didn't kill an elderly lady. Blore denies giving false evidence in court in return for promotion, and Dr Armstrong pretends he can't remember the patient he is supposed to have killed whilst drunk. Emily Brent says she doesn't have to defend herself because didn't commit any crime. Then Marston takes a drink and falls down dead. He has drunk poison. The group speculate as to whether he has killed himself or been murdered.

Chapters 5–6: The next morning, Mrs Rogers is discovered dead in her bed. Mr Blore puts forward the theory that Mr Rogers has killed his wife because he feared she would tell the others about the old lady they had murdered. Later, Mr Rogers tells Armstrong that two of the ten little soldiers are missing. Vera and Emily go for a walk and Emily reveals that she had sometime in the past dismissed a servant girl, who was pregnant, and that the girl had subsequently drowned herself in a river. She is not sorry for what happened. Lombard and Armstrong agree that Rogers might have killed his wife but can't believe that Marston killed himself. Lombard believes somebody killed him. Lombard reveals he has a gun and they decide to search the island for Mr Owen. They come across General Macarthur who is clearly in a deranged state of mind. They find no sign of Owen and decide he must be in the house.

Chapters 7–8: Armstrong goes outside to call General Macarthur to lunch, but the General is dead. Somebody has hit him on the head with an object. Vera notices that there are now only seven soldiers on the table. The judge believes that all the deaths were the work of a murderer and that the murderer is one of the group. The atmosphere becomes heated when accusations are made that some people in the group had the opportunity to kill the three deceased members. The next day, Vera notices that another soldier is missing, leaving only six. Rogers is discovered dead outside with a cut in the back of his head. At breakfast the group appear calm but they are all thinking about who will be the next victim, and about the mysterious disappearance of some grey wool and a red curtain the previous day.

Chapters 9–10: Emily Brent is sitting alone in the dining-room. She is sleepy and thinks she hears the sound of a bee in the room. Then she feels a sting on her neck. She is

discovered dead a short time afterwards. She has died as a result of being injected with poison from a needle. They look for the doctor's needle but it has disappeared and so has Lombard's gun. They find the needle near the dining-room window. Vera feels unwell and goes to her room. She panics when the smell of the sea reminds her of something in her past and she screams. The others come to her aid with the exception of the judge. They look for him and find his dead body dressed in a red curtain and with grey wool on his head. He has been shot in the head. Later that night, Lombard finds his gun in his cupboard. Blore sees someone stealthily leaving the house and assumes it is Doctor Armstrong. Blore and Lombard go in search of Armstrong without success.

Chapters 11–12: Blore tells Vera that he thinks Lombard is the killer, but she insists it is Armstrong. Then, they find Blore dead, killed by a falling stone clock from an upstairs window. They then find Armstrong's drowned body washed up on some rocks by the sea. Vera and Lombard are the only two left. Lombard wants to kill Vera but she has taken his gun. She shoots him dead. Later, she goes to her room where she sees a chair placed under a rope. Tortured by guilt she hangs herself. The police are baffled when they find ten dead bodies. The mystery is explained when they receive a letter from Justice Wargrave. The letter explains how and why he killed all the guests. He had faked his own death with the help of Doctor Armstrong, and then had shot himself at the end in the manner the police believe he had done it, according to the notes left by some of the guests.

Background and themes

Justice: This is the most important theme, and it is indeed a judge who administers justice by killing people who had committed crimes, but were out of reach of the law.

Guilt: Each of the guests, except the judge, has a guilty conscience. Some of the guests do recognise that they have really have done something wrong, and this manifests itself in nightmare visions, whereas there are others who describe their actions as accidents.

Concealment and confession: Because of their guilt, the guests initially conceal the true nature of their actions. However, a powerful need to confess at least part of the truth causes them to reveal certain facts to the others.



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Discussion activities

Before reading

- Write:** Tell the students that they are going to read a murder mystery book. Put them in pairs and ask them to make a list of all the words that they know that could be related to a murder mystery. The pair with the longest list wins.

Chapters 1–2

While reading (p. 6, after ‘Young people today were rude and lazy and she had no time for them.’)

- Discuss:** Put students in small groups and ask them to talk about the above sentence and whether they agree with it or not. Ask them to consider the following questions: *Do young people not want to work or is there not enough work for them to do? Do young people today use more bad language than before? Do they listen to what their parents tell them? Are they selfish? Are they only interested in money and famous people?*

After reading

- Write and ask:** Write *How much money did Mr Morris give Philip Lombard?* on the board and elicit the answer (100 pounds). Ask students to write another question about something in Chapters 1–2. Now have students stand up and walk around the classroom, asking and answering each other's questions.

Chapters 3–4

While reading (p. 24, after ‘I've always acted correctly.’)

- Predict:** Tell the students that one of the ten guests is going to be murdered in Chapter 4. Also tell them that the murderer is going to kill the person who did the least serious crime first. Put the students in pairs and ask them to predict who it will be and how he or she will die.

After reading

- Pair work:** Write the following words on the board: *crash, music, Norway, paintings, drowned, bank, choked, picture.* Ask the students talk and write in pairs to say how these words were used in Chapters 3–4.

Chapters 5–6

While reading (p. 29, after ‘Suddenly Dr Armstrong woke up.’)

- Discuss:** Put students in small groups to discuss the following questions: *Do you usually remember your dreams? What kind of dreams do you have? Can you remember any bad dreams? Do you ever have the same dream again? Do you think dreams have a meaning? Do you think dreams can tell us the future?*

After reading

- Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 5–6. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the mistakes.

Chapters 7–8

While reading (p. 50, after ‘–did you really lie in court?’)

- Discuss:** Remind the students that Blore told a lie to get a better job. Put them in small groups and ask them to discuss the following questions: *Why do people tell lies? Is it sometimes better to tell a lie than say something true and if so, when? Do you ever tell lies?*

After reading

- Write and guess:** Write *Four men finished searching the island.* on the board. Elicit which word is wrong from the students (three not four). Now students choose a sentence from Chapters 7–8 and rewrite it changing one word. Students walk around the classroom, reading out their sentences and the other students have to identify and correct the mistake.

Chapters 9–10

While reading (p. 59, after ‘She was afraid of the dark.’)

- Discuss:** Write the word *phobia* on the board and explain its meaning. In pairs, ask the students to write a list of the things people can have phobias about. Write their suggestions on the board and add some of your own. Then ask them to discuss the following questions: *Do you have a phobia? What happens to people when they see something they are afraid of? What is the strangest phobia you have ever heard of? What can people do to stop phobias?*

After reading

- Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 9–10. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the mistakes.

Chapters 11–12

While reading (p. 67, after ‘Their eyes met.’)

- Role play:** Put the students in pairs and ask them to act out a conversation between Vera and Lombard. See Discussion activities key for an example start to the conversation.

After reading

- Write:** Put the students in small groups and tell them to write a newspaper article about the mysterious killings on the island. Tell them to make the story as sensational as possible and to include interviews with the police and illustrations.