

# Literary analysis of and then there were none by agatha christie



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The murder mystery of the century! Unfortunately the term, perhaps the genre itself has become so grossly overused, it has lost its meaning to the general public. However, back in 1939 Agatha Christie wrote a novel with such a captivating story and complex characters, the now washed out label “Murder Mystery” hardly does the book justice. Each of the characters and their corresponding actions shine light on the human condition and the strengths and weaknesses it possesses. In Agatha Christie’s *And Then There Were None* Emily Brent, Vera Claythorne, and Dr. Armstrong - each prominent characters in the storyline - in turn represent humanity’s self-righteousness, inherent need of connection, and blind trust in its leaders. Emily Brent was the fifth person to be murdered, drugged with chloral and given a lethal injection of cyanide. Her reason was causing the suicide of a young girl under her care. Unlike most of the characters left alive at that point, she harbored no remorse for her crime. She was religiously devout and believed that because taking your own life was wrong in the eyes of God, she had nothing to feel guilty for.

This led to her commonly used justification when asked about the incident, “I have nothing with which to reproach myself.” Her puritan views further fed into her feelings of superiority over the other characters because she used them to detach herself from her negative feelings over anything she may have done wrong. I believe that because of her actions and words in the novel up until her death, Emily Brent represents humanity’s self-righteousness and tendency to justify their wrongdoings under the shield of religion. Vera Claythorne, the last surviving person excluding Justice Wargrave, represents humanity’s built-in need for communication and

connection. This may be viewed as a weakness in a life or death situation, as being too open may lead to your information being spread, making your murder easier. However, in *And Then There Were None* this particular trait was portrayed as a strength. Vera's social nature made those around her trust and confide in her. Rather than playing her as an overly naive girl bound to wind up dead before the third chapter, she is played as an emotionally warped young woman, wise beyond her years, who only murdered in the first place for love. She is stable and upbeat on the outside, but almost at her breaking point within. Because of this, most characters, including Lombard, wrote her off as unthreatening until it was too late.

After shooting Philip Lombard in a moment of panic and fear, Vera is mentally exhausted and broken. Justice Wargrave sets the stage in her room and in a trance, she hangs herself. Both a blessing and a curse, Vera Claythorne's character symbolises mankind's need for connection, and what that instinct may drive it to do. Dr. Armstrong, the sixth person to die, embodies man's blind trust in its leaders. He was killed by being pushed off a cliff after Wargrave convinced him to lean over the edge. Armstrong allied with the former beforehand, who was still pretending to be an innocent guest. He helped fake Wargrave's death in a plot to throw off the murderer. It was stated by the Justice in his confession letter that "He knew me by sight and reputation and it was inconceivable to him that a man of my standing could actually be a murderer!" (p. 294) leading to the conclusion that Armstrong based his trust on status alone and didn't think to judge a person's character; a dangerous flaw to have when one among a group is a killer.

This weakness of trust in a self-proclaimed leader without question eventually lead to his death. In his poor judgement and the actions it led to, Dr. Armstrong represents humanity's blind trust in its leaders. Overall, Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* is a fantastic novel that encapsulates many of mankind's supreme strengths and fatal weaknesses into only ten characters. From religious devotion to unquestioning trust in its questionable leaders, it's amazing to see every corner of humanity come together and watch as their lives are put on the line.