

Agatha christie: life and career essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie, DBE (née Miller; 15 September 1890 – 12 January 1976) was a British crime writer of novels, short stories, and plays. She also wrote six romances under the name Mary Westmacott, but she is best remembered for the 66 detective novels and more than 15 short story collections she wrote under her own name, most of which revolve around the investigations of such characters as Hercule Poirot, Miss Jane Marple and Tommy and Tuppence. Christie had long been a fan of detective novels, having enjoyed Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* as well as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's early Sherlock Holmes stories. Deciding to write her own detective novel, entitled *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, she created a detective named Hercule Poirot to be her protagonist. A former Belgian police officer noted for his twirly moustache and egg-shaped head, Poirot had been a refugee who had fled to Britain following Germany's invasion of Belgium; in this manner, Christie had been influenced by the Belgian refugees whom she had encountered in Torquay.[28]

After unsuccessfully sending her manuscript to such publishing companies as Hodder and Stoughton and Methuen, she sent it to John Lane at The Bodley Head, who kept it for several months before announcing that the press would publish it on the condition that Christie agreed to change the ending. She duly did so, and signed a contract with Lane that she would later claim was exploitative.[29] Christie meanwhile settled into married life, giving birth to a daughter named Rosalind at Ashfield, where the couple – having few friends in London – spent much of their time.[30] Having left the Air Force at the end of the war, Archie gained a job in the City working in the financial sector, and although he started out on a relatively low salary, he

was still able to employ a maid for his family.[31] Christie's second novel, *The Secret Adversary* (1922), featured new protagonists in the form of detective couple Tommy and Tuppence; again published by The Bodley Head, it earned her £50. She followed this with a third novel, once again featuring Poirot, entitled *Murder on the Links* (1923), as well as a series of Poirot short stories commissioned by Bruce Ingram, editor of *Sketch* magazine.[32]

Agatha Christie's first novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* was published in 1920 and introduced the long-running character detective Hercule Poirot, who appeared in 33 of Christie's novels and 54 short stories. Well-known Miss Marple was introduced in *The Thirteen Problems* in 1927 (short stories) and was based on Christie's grandmother and her "Ealing cronies".[55] Both Jane and Gran "always expected the worst of everyone and everything, and was, with almost frightening accuracy, usually proved right." [56] Almost all of Christie's books are whodunits, focusing on the British middle and upper classes. Usually, the detective either stumbles across the murder or is called upon by an old acquaintance, who is somehow involved. Gradually, the detective interrogates each suspect, examines the scene of the crime and makes a note of each clue, so readers can analyse it and be allowed a fair chance of solving the mystery themselves. Then, about halfway through, or sometimes even during the final act, one of the suspects usually dies, often because they have inadvertently deduced the killer's identity and need silencing. In a few of her novels, including *Death Comes as the End* and *And Then There Were None*, there are multiple victims. Finally, the detective organises a meeting of all the suspects and slowly denounces the guilty

party, exposing several unrelated secrets along the way, sometimes over the course of thirty or so pages.

The murders are often extremely ingenious, involving some convoluted piece of deception. Christie's stories are also known for their taut atmosphere and strong psychological suspense, developed from the deliberately slow pace of her prose. Twice, the murderer surprisingly turns out to be the unreliable narrator of the story. In six stories, Christie allows the murderer to escape justice (and in the case of the last three, implicitly almost approves of their crimes); these are *The Witness for the Prosecution*, *Five Little Pigs*, *The Man in the Brown Suit*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Curtain* and *The Unexpected Guest*. (When Christie adapted *Witness* into a stage play, she lengthened the ending so that the murderer was also killed.) There are also numerous instances where the killer is not brought to justice in the legal sense but instead dies (death usually being presented as a more 'sympathetic' outcome), for example *Death Comes as the End*, *And Then There Were None*, *Death on the Nile*, *Dumb Witness*, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, *Crooked House*, *Appointment with Death*, *The Hollow*, *Nemesis*, *Cat Among the Pigeons*, and *The Secret Adversary*. In some cases this is with the collusion of the detective involved. In some stories the question of whether formal justice will be done is left unresolved, such as *Five Little Pigs*, and arguably *Ordeal by Innocence*.