

DAME AGATHA CHRISTIE

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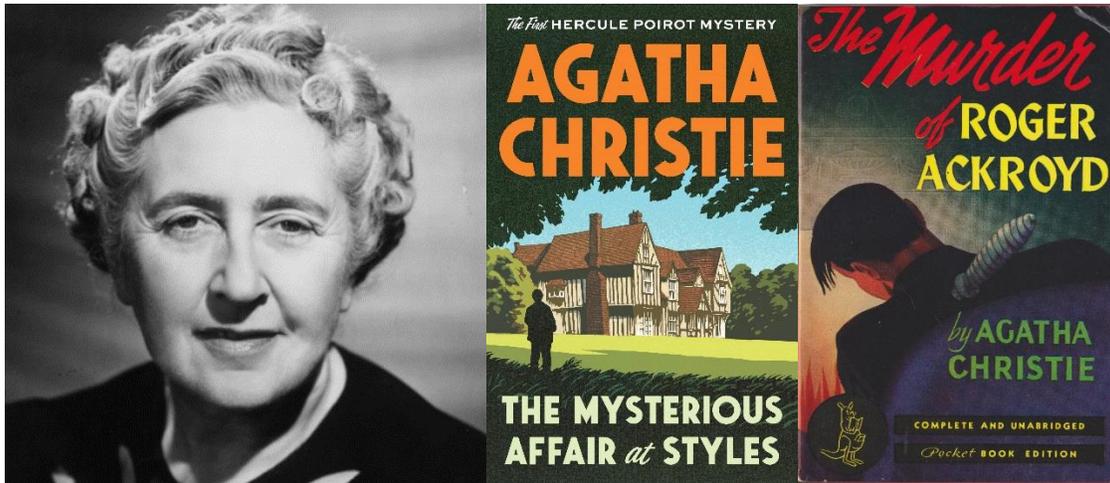
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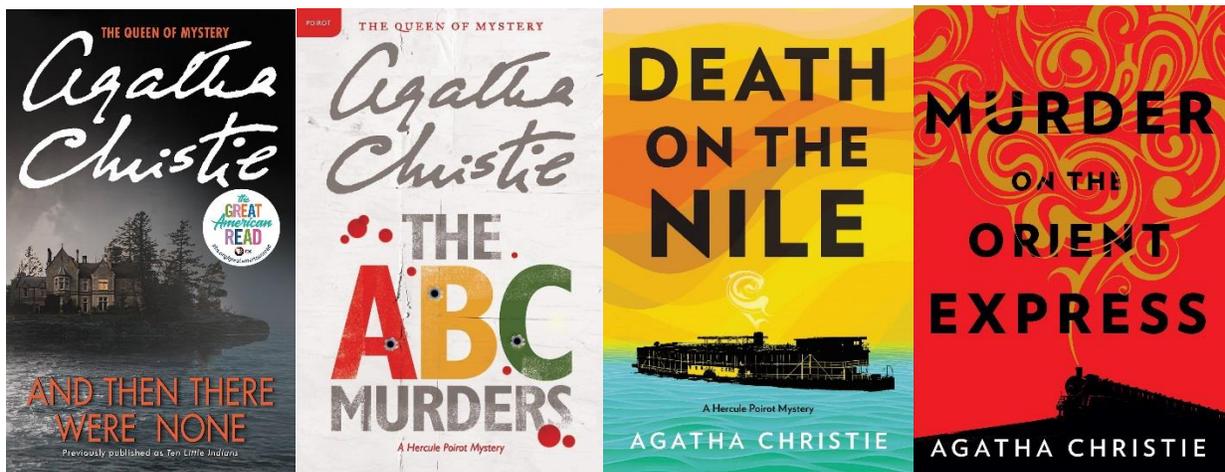
Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie, Lady Mallowan, DBE (née Miller; 15 September 1890 – 12 January 1976) was an English writer known for her 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections, particularly those revolving around fictional detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. She also wrote the world's longest-running play, *The Mousetrap*, which was performed in the West End from 1952 to 2020, as well as six novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott. In 1971, she was made a Dame (DBE) for her contributions to literature. Guinness World Records lists Christie as the best-selling fiction writer of all time, her novels having sold more than two billion copies.

Christie was born into a wealthy upper-middle-class family in Torquay, Devon, and was largely home-schooled. She was initially an unsuccessful writer with six consecutive rejections, but this changed in 1920 when *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, featuring detective Hercule Poirot, was published. Her first husband was Archibald Christie; they married in 1914 and had one child before divorcing in 1928. During both World Wars, she served in hospital dispensaries, acquiring a thorough knowledge of the poisons which featured in many of her novels, short stories, and plays. Following her marriage to archaeologist Max Mallowan in 1930, she spent several months each year on digs in the Middle East and used her first-hand knowledge of his profession in her fiction.

According to *Index Translationum*, she remains the most-translated individual author. Her novel *And Then There Were None* is one of the highest-selling books of all time, with approximately 100 million copies sold. Christie's stage play *The Mousetrap* holds the world

record for the longest initial run. It opened at the Ambassadors Theatre in the West End of London on 25 November 1952, and by September 2018 there had been more than 27,500 performances. The play was closed down in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In 1955, Christie was the first recipient of the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award. Later that year, *Witness for the Prosecution* received an Edgar Award for best play. In 2013, she was voted the best crime writer and *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* the best crime novel ever by 600 professional novelists of the Crime Writers' Association. In September 2015, *And Then There Were None* was named the "World's Favourite Christie" in a vote sponsored by the author's estate. Most of Christie's books and short stories have been adapted for television, radio, video games, and graphic novels. More than 30 feature films are based on her work. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agatha_Christie



15 Mysterious Facts About Agatha Christie

1. Agatha Christie's mother was against her daughter learning to read. Before becoming a bestselling novelist, Agatha Christie was in real danger of growing up an illiterate. Her mother was said to be against her daughter learning how to read until age 8 (Christie taught herself) and insisted on home-schooling the budding author. Mrs. Christie refused to let Agatha pursue any formal education until the age of 15, when her family dispatched her to a Paris finishing school.
2. Agatha Christie's first novel was written on a dare. After an adolescence spent reading books and writing stories, Christie's sister Madge dared her sibling to attack a novel-length project. Christie accepted the challenge and penned *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, a mystery featuring a soldier on sick leave who finds himself embroiled in a poisoning at a friend's estate. The novel, which featured Hercule Poirot, was rejected by six publishers before being printed in 1920.
3. Hercule Poirot was based on a real person. The dapper Poirot, a mustachioed detective who took a gentleman's approach to crime-solving, might be Christie's best-known creation. Christie

was said to have been inspired when she caught sight of a Belgian man debarking a bus in the early 1910s. He was reportedly a bit odd-looking, with a curious style of facial hair and a quizzical expression. His fictional counterpart's debut in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* would be Poirot's first of more than 40 appearances.

4. Agatha Christie once disappeared for 10 days. In 1926, Christie—who was already garnering a large and loyal fan base—left her home in London without a trace. It could've been the beginning of one of her sordid stories, particularly since her husband, Archie, had recently disclosed he had fallen in love with another woman and wanted a divorce. A police manhunt ensued, although it was unnecessary: Christie had simply driven out of town to a spa, possibly to get her mind off her tumultuous home life. The author made no mention of it in her later autobiography; some speculated it was a publicity stunt, while others believed the family's claim that she had experienced some kind of amnesic event.

5. Agatha Christie wasn't big on violence in her work. While a murder is typically needed to set a murder mystery in motion, Christie's preferred methodology for slaying her characters was poison: She had worked in a dispensary during wartime and had an intimate knowledge of pharmaceuticals. Rarely did her protagonists carry a gun; her two most famous detectives, Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot, were virtual pacifists.

6. Agatha Christie had an alias. Not all of Christie's work had a mortality rate. Beginning in 1930 and continuing through 1956, she wrote six romance novels under the pen name Mary Westmacott. The pseudonym was a construct of her middle name, Mary, with Westmacott being the surname of her relatives.

7. Agatha Christie loved surfing. The image of Christie as a matronly author of mystery is the one most easily recognized by readers, but there was a time when Christie could be found catching waves. Along with her husband, Archie, Christie went on a traveling spree in 1922, starting in South Africa and winding up in Honolulu. At each step, the couple got progressively more capable riding surfboards; some historians believe they may have even been the first British surfers to learn how to ride standing up.

8. Agatha Christie didn't like taking an author's photo. Although not explicitly camera-shy—Christie took frequent photos while traveling—she appeared to dislike having her photo appear on the dust jackets of her novels and once insisted they be issued without a likeness attached. It's likely Christie preferred not to be recognized in public.

9. Agatha Christie took an oath of detective writing. Founded in 1928 by writer Anthony Berkeley, the London Detection Club, or Famous Detection Club, was a social assembly of the notable crime writers in England. Members "swore" (tongue mostly in cheek) to never keep vital clues from their readers and to never use entirely fictional poisons as a plot crutch. Christie was a member in good standing and took on the role of honorary president in 1956 on one condition: She never wanted to give any speeches.

10. Agatha Christie tried her best to take up smoking. While it would shortly gain a reputation for killing its devotees, smoking was once so revered that it seemed unusual not to take a puff. Shortly after the end of the first world war, Christie was quoted as saying she was disappointed that she couldn't seem to adopt the habit even though she had been trying.

11. Agatha Christie wrote a play that ran for over 27,000 performances. The curtain was first raised on Mousetrap in London's West End in 1952. After 68 years, the "initial run" of the play was finally shut due to the corona virus pandemic. The play—about a group of people trapped in a snowbound cabin with a murderer among them—was originally a radio story, **Three Blind Mice**, that was written at the behest of Queen Mary in 1947.

12. Agatha Christie loved archaeology. After divorcing alleged cad Archie, Christie married archaeologist Max Mallowan in 1930 and joined him for regular expeditions to Syria and Iraq. In 2015, HarperCollins published **Come, Tell Me How You Live**, the author's long-forgotten 1946 memoir of her experiences traveling. Although she assisted her husband on digs, she never stopped working on her writing: Their preferred method of transport was frequently the Orient Express, a fact that likely inspired her **Murder on the Orient Express**.

13. At least one of Agatha Christie's fictional "victims" was inspired by a real-life nuisance. When Mallowan married Christie, he was assistant to renowned archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley. This fact upset Woolley's wife, who refused to let Christie stay in a Mesopotamia digging camp; Mallowan was forced to take a train into Baghdad every night to see her. Christie soon wrote **Murder in Mesopotamia**: The victim was the wife of an archaeology field director who was bludgeoned with an antique mace. Christie dedicated the book to the Woolleys, who never joined Mallowan on an expedition again.

14. You can rent Agatha Christie's old home. If you feel like inhabiting the same real estate as Christie is a bucket-list travel opportunity, her former home in Devonshire, England is available for rent. The centuries-old home was Christie's summer getaway in the 1950s; portions of it are rented out to individuals or groups for \$500 a night. Some furniture and a piano that once belonged to the author remain in residence.

15. The *New York Times* ran an obituary for Hercule Poirot when he "died." Like Arthur Conan Doyle before her, Christie eventually grew tired of her trademark character and set about having Hercule Poirot perish in the 1975 novel *Curtain*. The reaction to his demise was so fierce that The New York Times published a front-page "obituary" for the character on August 6. Christie died the following year. © <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/85723/15-mysterious-facts-about-agatha-christie>