The Murder of Roger Ackroyd

Agatha Christie · *1926 · original English text*

In the English village of King's Abbot, the rich manufacturer Roger Ackroyd is found dead in his study the night after a woman's death. The narrator, the village doctor James Sheppard, helps his new neighbor, a retired detective who grows vegetable marrows, to look into it. The neighbor is Hercule Poirot. Christie's novel is a classic of the puzzle mystery, and this map keeps the solution out.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Who killed Roger Ackroyd, and what can a patient detective learn from the small lies that every person in a village tells?

The book answers by showing that every suspect has something to hide, and not always the crime. Poirot goes through the house and the village question by question, and each secret that comes to light is a step forward. The solution is a famous surprise in the history of detective fiction. A first-time reader should avoid reading about the ending before the last chapters.

KEY CHARACTERS

Dr. James Sheppard
The village doctor and narrator.

Hercule Poirot
The retired detective next door.

Roger Ackroyd
A rich manufacturer.

Caroline Sheppard
The doctor's sister, a gossip.

Flora Ackroyd
Roger's niece.

Ralph Paton
Roger's stepson.

Major Blunt
A big-game hunter and a friend of the house.

Inspector Raglan
The police officer on the case.

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
The Village and the Neighbor
CHAPTERS I–III

Dr. Sheppard is called to the death of Mrs. Ferrars, and his sister Caroline gossips about her. Ackroyd's household and the village are introduced, and a mysterious foreigner grows vegetable marrows next door.

- Caroline Sheppard is the village's chief source of news.
- The household at Fernly Park is large and full of tensions.
- The marrow-grower is Poirot, in retirement.

02
Dinner and Murder
CHAPTERS IV–VI

Dr. Sheppard dines at Fernly Park, where Ackroyd receives a letter that distresses him. Later that night Ackroyd is found dead in his study and Ralph Paton cannot be found.

- The dinner party sets out the suspects.
- The Tunisian dagger is the weapon.
- Ralph Paton's absence makes him a suspect.

03
Poirot Takes the Case
CHAPTERS VII–XI

Flora Ackroyd asks Poirot to investigate. With Inspector Raglan and Dr. Sheppard he examines the house, the goldfish pond, and the staff.

- Poirot is called out of retirement.
- The goldfish pond is a place to look.
- The parlormaid and the household are questioned.

04
The Round of Questions
CHAPTERS XII–XVIII

Poirot interviews the secretary, the butler, the housekeeper, and Mrs. Ackroyd, follows up a telephone call, and learns that the household is full of small concealments.

- Each interview shows a different kind of reserve.
- The goose quill is a small clue.
- The household's secrets are not all about murder.

05
Secrets Come Out
CHAPTERS XIX–XXII

Flora, Miss Russell, and the parlormaid are questioned, and a paragraph in the newspaper stirs a response. One secret after another is brought into the light.

- The newspaper paragraph is Poirot's bait.
- Each confession changes the picture.
- Poirot says he will have the truth from all.

06
The Reunion and the Truth
CHAPTERS XXIII–XXVI

Poirot gathers everyone at Fernly and demands the whole truth. Ralph Paton's story is heard and the case is drawn to its end.

- Poirot's 'little reunion' is the gathering of suspects.
- Ralph's account is one of the last pieces.
- The solution is the novel's famous turn.

07
Apologia
CHAPTER XXVII

The narrator writes a last chapter that closes his manuscript.

- The last chapter is brief.
- It speaks to the way the story has been told.
- The book ends on the narrator's voice.

Detection · Secrets · Justice · The Village

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. Keep a list of what each person says they did that night.
2. Keep track of times, and of one telephone call.
3. Poirot says everyone is hiding something. Ask whether that is true.
4. Read the last chapter after the rest, and then think about how the book was told.

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